



THE LONDON APHRODITE

edited by Jack Lindsay and P. R. Stephensen

No. 2	CONTENTS	OCTOBER 1928
		PAGE
Joy's CONFESSIONAL (With an etching by Norman Lindsay)	Jack Lindsay	66
FIVE CHRISTS	Thomas Earp	77
RED BARBARA	Liam O'Flaherty	78
THREE NIGHTS IN FEZ	Sacheverell Sitwell	84
THE ALEMBICS	Richard Church	85
J. C. SQUIRE (ETC.)	P. R. Stephensen	86
SALUT D'AMOUR	Anna Wickham	92
ANOTHER GODIVA	T. F. Powys	93
TWO POEMS	Stanley Snaith	97
BLACK BILL'S FRIENDSHIP	Norman Lindsay	99
THREE	Karel Capek	105
CONFESSION OF A LARRIKIN	Serge Essenin	111
PRELUDE	Elza de Loere	113
SIR HORACE WISEACRE	Robert Nichols	115
DUNG OF PEGASUS (Part II)	Peter Meadows	116
TRANSLATION FROM HEINE	Kenneth Slessor	125
EPILOGUE TO TRAGEDY	Rupert Atkinson	126
A BED OF FEATHERS	Rhys Davies	129
THE FAILURE	Jack Lindsay	151

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JOY'S CONFESSIONAL

by JACK LINDSAY

(C# *Minor Quartet, Opus 131: Beethoven*)

Adagio

Across the flowers hung with ribbons of the wind,
Those beads of sweetness on the bosomed air,
Comes one so beautiful, so beautiful
The buds take bees of colour from her hair.
O lonely garden iced with flowers,
I have walked there.

Who walked with me, who was it walked with me
Ankle-deep in the wide pasturing skies?
Look afar, the stars are gusty; lamentations
From earth orphaned by dark winds arise.
Your face foams through seas of stone, your small
warm face
Dies in my eyes.

The wind has blown the flowers out. The wind is dark.
And heaven droops with its weight of stars. I see
The stars one moment mirrored on the wind,
The aspen-stars leafing eternity.
What is it then, O fierce immortal eyes,
You ask of me?

The flower-edges of slicing silver cut
My flesh, and light is tattered on the trees.
The streaming marble is meadowed with cold moonlight,
And the stars are spray of the breaking wind, are bees
Hiving kisses. Reefed clouds let out your face
From deep seas.

Door after door along the dwindling mind
Opens and shuts. There is no end, I say.
O wind of rippling stone, break, break the sky
Untrellis the beading stars, that glassy spray,
Hew darkness down, let the vast twinkling tree
Fall roaring away.

O flowing silence, drown not this one face
Behind the stiffening wind, that veil of stone
That laps beauty in from our hands beating
In blood of pain. O face my love has known,
Be not from the barred casement of my thought
By darkness blown.

Press on the gust of crystal your flushed mouth,
Kiss me through the windows of the wind,
Do not leave me to the loneliness of pain.
Wait with me, it is not so long, behind
The shadow of silence wisped with music floating
Up through my mind.

The body strung with pain, the nettled air
And spiky stars, the twisted winds, all these

Fade as the beauty gossamer'd by moonlight
 Bends through a song.
 Let us stroke plumaged quiet, let us dare
 This small face powdered with eternities
 To peep through mirrors candled in the soul
 Into our suffering. Once more I say,
 It is not for so long.

Allegro molte vivace

The flowers frozen in the wind
 Thaw, and music runs about.
 "Come in, come in."
 The star-boys answer with a shout.

The flowers thawed with warm perfume
 Lure the lovers through the gloom,
 And will-o'-the-wisp roses
 Flit from mind to mind.
 Where are you, Beauty, where?
 "I am doing up my hair
 By the lanterns of music swung
 From our kisses threaded
 On a sweet desire."
 I cannot see the music-flare.
 "Here I am bedded."
 O I tire, I tire.

The flowers tress'd with the wind
 Shake and wake, their scents they comb.
 The gate uncloses.
 Who's there? Mænads coming home!

The moon immersed in marble seas
 Smocks them with beauty to the knees,
 Then even moonlight
 Their kisses doff.
 Where are you, dear one? speak.
 "A velvet wind is on my cheek,
 A glove of wind. But O I know
 The hand within is chilly—
 Come to my aid."
 Where are you? Vainly I seek,
 My torch is a lily.
 "O I am afraid."

Look the bustling stars, O look
 The moonlight threshing on a brook.
 Beauty, where are you?
 Before the flowers frost
 With arctic fear again,
 And your voice is lost
 Against the silence meshed with pain,
 Tell me where you are.
 O let the mænad-wenches in
 Through the lattice of that star.

Allegro moderato

Let them dance. Dance, I cry,
The flowers need music for their scent,
And we must give them cymbal-crashes
To smear their brightness on the air.

Dance. Is it so hard to keep
Spring swept clean in bud and sky?
A simple task to polish star and darken Venus'
lashes.

O ballet-mænads hired to bring
Your ankles wading in our laughter,
Dances enamelling the Spring,

Who sent you?

I bought them with a song.

Where, where?

Far away, too far to tell . . .

O no more ask

Beauty discarding mask on mask

And yet no nearer to the face

Kisses mirror in the moon.

Dance, dance . . .

O I know well

Spring's tune.

Andante ma non troppo

Flowers, glassed in music, spill
Your perfume on my thought
Unless the dark lute's fading notes
You into silence caught.

Air gathers up its petals of sound
Like sunsets cropped by night—
Have my friends, have my friends
Taken flight?

Yet kisses wander in the glade,
Moth-like kisses blindly
Dusting beauty off as music
Brushes on the mind.

The night is mothed with kisses; only,
They are blind, they fumble
At the moonlight, and I'm lonely . . .
They will leave me soon.

What of that? The dust of music
Clouds the moonlight still.
But why did my friends all steal away,
Shutting-to the moon?

Open moon O open
I beat upon your gate.
"All have passed through,
It is too late."

Of the delusive moon ; and though my friends
 Have on me slammed a door
 Of corrugated darkness, yet I know
 What purpose sends
 This nemesis
 Of knouted laughter. Tasseled beauty strips
 For the confiding kiss,
 To find bright blood on the lips.
 I know this, and I knew it all before.

Creep then a moment, tender kisses, creep
 Out of the stone of this unfading sleep,
 Mouthwards. And wimpling moonlight, for a space,
 Out of its frosted secrecy let peep
 The silver warmth of that malicious face.

Adagio

I should never have set out for the moon
 Upon the dazzled rivers of the wind.

No !

What do I care ? As well die, stormed by trumpeting danger,
 Crushed by the rolling moon.
 We shall die anyway. Take comfort then, we die.

Why ?

How many stars have I prised out of the sky ?
 Count them, Venus, you can have them for a necklace, I don't
 want them,

La !

Off to the moon we set in a gondola.

Venus, my girl of foaming stone, was there, and trailed her
 hand

In the curdling wind-waters, up the lily-track to the moon,
 O . . . she said.

It is easy sailing when our kisses set the right way,
 And if we strike no reef of foundered blossoms, all will yet
 be safe

And we shall land upon the delicate foam-edges,
 Climb the stairs of sopping laughter, and be upon the moon.

Now we are sailors on the halcyonic moonlight,
 Navigating by steadfast kisses instead of the damp stars

For a beauty engulfed in the mind's antiquity.
 We are cradled in webbed kisses like a girl in pooled hair,
 In the furrowed moonlight of your floating tresses.

What do I care ?

" O kiss me ! "

Darling Venus, Moon to starboard,
 O the sobbing moonlight of your mouth !

Allegretto

We are betrayed. The moon is gone,
 Although the moonlight slumbers on
 Inside your kisses, and a wake
 Of flowers coiling at our back
 Lights our streaming kisses' track.

O darkness sculptured with our kisses
Let me look
Upon this beauty I have won
From clay and the granitic sun.
We are betrayed, the moon is smashed
By fingers of the tampering sky . . .
And yet, and yet
Who brings the lashes of moonlight down?
Is it I?

Still, a moment . . . still . . .
The enemy paces near.
What do I gain
By planting beauty's flag on the walls
Frontiered by darkness, when
I know : Soon, soon it falls ?
And laughter's fortalice, heaven's most outlying kiss,
is far away
Beyond these swinging wars, beyond
This cleft and wind-logged earth.

Adagio ma non troppo

Did I then leaf the night with fear
And in the cauldrons of the sun venom
The fumes of light with pain?
Between each breath
Thrusts widening terror, and the panting sun
Winces through goading air.
Is it not strange that Beauty gardens here
In muddy death?
Jarred by the slabby wind of hate
My body cries.
I am breathless, I am breathless, stabbed, stabbed
With needling skies,
The splintering stars, the brittle stars of glass,
Make inquisition of my trembling flesh,
Darkness replies.
I who was naked to the mouth of Venus,
I am betrayed
To roping pain—the nakedness of love
By darkness flayed
Become the nakedness of breathing pain,
of pain . . .

Allegretto

Trees ragged with the wearing light
And all the shaky stars
That poignant laughter to the heart,
Quiver above me, sheafing fire
Of ringing anguish, brazen grief
Clanged petals of the wind.
But do not kisses shiver too
With a withdrawing laughter clinging
To the happy lips?

Trees, unsheaf the stars, for I
 With magian kisses do defy
 This fear that tendrils every leaf—
 I have no fear of you,
 Swooping trees bedizened with stars,
 Trees beaked with fire O rage
 Of wind ridden by warlock-stars,
 Crunching stars, whose blood is this ?
 Mine, mine, upon the moon.

Yet shall I challenge with a kiss,
 My kiss shall loose a dove on high
 Safe through the eagles of the wind.

Not yet I die.
 But O my blood glares on the moon . . .
 How shall I wipe this murdered joy
 out of my mind ?
 How wash the moon with murder dyed ?
 Is there no way ?

 no way
 To statue night with lovers lying
 Kissing-close, side by side
 Love a-dying.

I kissed the marble Venus
 with bleeding lips
 And now her lips are red.
 Red-mouthed statue, moon
 Bloodied with death,
 Is Venus dead ?
 Lift up.

Presto

A rescue ! Has the moon thrown wide its doors ?
 The shadows seethe with flowers.
 My friends are here, are here ; and all the stars
 Are fire-drops cleaving to the eaves of heaven
 From fountains willowed in the moon.
 O love that storms the night,
 Is the field ours ?

Look, every shadow
 Is lilied with lovers.
 O give me your hand
 That I may be quite sure.
 Here it is, here it is.

Look how their kisses
 Drawn moonlight covers.
 Each bud has tugged loudly
 Its belfry of scents,
 The woods are cathedraled
 With scents peeling proudly.
 All lovers that sleep
 In the rays of a rose,
 In the calyx of a star
 Closed warmly and deeply

Have heard your voice crying
Your beleaguered kiss—

I cannot believe it,
Fear was so dark,
Are you here?—We are here
O do not leave me.

Poor child, look around you.
See, darkness is opaled
With vanishing kisses and
opening moons.

The wind is a ladder
runged with kisses
and embraces blowing
round ruffled bodies
like sunlight tagged
on a trailing blossom—

Catch it and climb
Up through the litter of
flirting roses,
Up up through the glitter
of moon-gems on leaves
irised with kisses O
Up through the scumbling clouds
Up to the moon.

Are we there?
No, it lies
Ten kisses further on.

I have lost your hand.
Here, here, and here . . .
Come back to earth then,
To the safety of flowers
Homely with tattered beauty.
Not all the ice of the wind
Can wither the spring to dead air;
Spring veins the stone of the wind,
That flower-ribbed writhing thing.
Yes, the gold ore of the Spring
In the quartz of the wind
Shall be beaten to blossoms
And trinkets of laughter.
Our kisses shall beat it,
Our fragilest kiss
Tears the dull terror of faceless air
And stamps it to dust
Spiraling flowers
Bellying with kisses
Reborn in the mind.

Speak once again
Lovers in the moon—
I was with you, I was with you,
I and I and I.

We all watched you coining
 Into beauty the earth that sludged
 Back to its marsh again,
 And the slottered sky
 Staining your fingers
 With the sloth of pain.

Pull his hair, Venus,
 He is yet dazed.
 Flowers still sift from shaken moonlight,
 More, more, and more.
 With kisses I am mazed,
 I cannot tell which kiss is mine . . .
 No matter. Spring's an endless store,
 And laughter pours out wine
 That smudges smiles on every face
 And flecks narcissi out
 And little chubby roses
 On all the wild place.
 See, all the beauty musicked in your soul
 Comes to meet you, comes to greet you.
 Take this song-wench on your knees,
 Beauty has come home again
 With flowers in her lap.
 You shall have blossoms catching hands
 with the enamoured moon,
 To dance for you and sing for you
 And give you kisses and all you please.
 On, dear morris belled
 With baby-roses.
 Music hath roundly spelled
 The garden-closes.
 All the guests of Beauty
 Have entered in.
 O what a twangling
 Crystal din !

Have I not wrought loveliness enough,
 Why cannot I now rest ?
 Why must I still weave laughter's stuff
 To make an arras for my dreams,
 And lag at the unfinished kiss
 Cradled at Venus' breast ?
 Here I shall stay.
 Come on.

No.

 Come on.

O I shall come then, up among
 The berried stars my wayward kisses
 Have set swinging O how often
 Have my kisses swung you
 Into queer patterns
 of criss-cross scents,
 Stars flurried with my pushing kisses ?

O joy that jangles
through rushing flowers beaded
with frost of the wind

Wait, I am not ready ! Up
they go
Through beauty trembling on a flower-lip
a mist of stars and leaves
turning up their white eyeballs, past
the skimming moon
Go then, it is best :
Lonely I die.

Adagio

For never till the gated death is at last found,
Can I unweave the wind, unhinge the moon
And go with trumpets into my own mind.
The garden ashed with moonlight glows around
With charring flowers.

The cindered flowers lichened as yet with crushed flame
And puffs of moonlight flake about my feet.
Is this where the beautiful one came walking,
That small face ivoried with moonlight . . .
Is this the way she came.

Now marble sunk altogether beneath the plunging wind,
Foam-lipped no longer, mirrored with no face,
Cisterns no mermaids. But I do not care.
I know lands meadowed with naked girls
All taking down or putting up their hair.
I have walked there.

Pain clings most where pain's clammy fingers quench
Not any slightest kiss, scarce lighted kiss—
Come, hoisted laughter !
For I have conquered though the key I lack
Awhile yet, that will let me open once more
Posterns of moonlight, once more unbolt beauty,
Crying : Into my own mind I am come back
From an alien shore.

Allegro

Then let us scour the dark for frightened death.
Get him at bay with hounds.
Why should I wait ? I'll run him down,
This villain, this
old ferryman, chapt death.

Who has seen him, seen him, seen him ?
Oyez, Oyez !
Who has seen death ?
A basket of stars and oranges,
A basket of fresh kisses,
For him who saith
Where the dark coward lurks.

He cannot now be very far away.
I have the right to hunt this vassal down.
In my own grounds,
In the manorial beauty of my soul,
I seek my prey.

For I have earned death's most heraldic pomp
And stamping triumph cymballed on heroes' shields.
Stamp the bronze shields of the beaten sky that day,
With spears let heroes smite them.
For I have earned these cymbals of pain's alloy,
My life is molten in the cauldrons of pain
To make this cast of joy.
Let me walk through death to the bright sound
Of flowers tempered with ringing sunlight struck
With bells of dew. O thou terrible joy
Sworded with pain !

Yet, gods, a question right into your ears !
Shall I not hurt you a little now that I
Have spent the last coin of this minted flesh
In gleaming laughter, since what I swore to do
I have done, and even the thumbscrew of the sky
Dare force no more from joy's confessional.
I have a word for you.

Is this garden with its mænad-flowers,
Its wild wild joy,
Outpost of yours ? And do earth's panged scents
Of roses trampled by centaur-hoofs
Make marle for heaven's roses ?
Is heaven worth this mud of trodden stars ?
What wisdom cankers earth under the sheen
Of Venus' endless kisses ?

For I disdain
This bravery paying off crawling death
With hostages of pain.
Is courage worth
The affront of casual evil, heaven worth
The shame of victory over earth ?
O well I know that joy
Loosed from these woods
Dwells only in battling beauty, tremendous skies
Welling with laughter rebellious against the chains
Of laughter already chapletting the soul,
Delight that hugs its enemy delight
As sunlight wrestles with a surge of flowers.
There is no end, I say—I say, there is no end.

Yet, gods, I would not slur the gold
Of wild wild joy by showing
Its compensations for the weight of pain,
Degrading it to scales
Of this most trivial anguished bravery.

How could pain merit joy ?
 For now I may speak the dreadful laughter quaking
 Under my thought, for pain can no more touch me,
 Wrung through with joy. For I am eaten with pain,
 The last worm of laughter has eaten me through.
 Now I may answer the question I feared to ask—
 Feared not for my own sake, not mine ! but
 For the gods' sake.
 Shall I make that dangerous mockery plain
 Now that Beauty unmoons her last small mask
 And fans the gilt flames of the flowers with her breath,
 Before that moon is shut
 Behind me ?

No, I shall not say a word,
 Save what by Apollo may be heard,
 Save what the plumed dew, the dripping wind
 Lattice with fire along the darkening mind.

September, 1925

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## FIVE CHRIST'S

*by* THOMAS EARP

Down in the South,  
 A Christ in a Romanesque church,  
 Curiously like a Buddha,  
 Podgy, voluptuous,  
 Lolling on his cross ;

On the hills,  
 Clumsily gashed in wood,  
 Worm-eaten, weather-beaten,  
 Christ,  
 With an arm rotted off ;

Christ in the Ile-de-France,  
 An exquisite young man,  
 Smooth, slender,  
 Whose blood is rubies ;

And, I forget where,  
 A Baroque Christ,  
 Rather stupid,  
 A gentleman's Christ,  
 Modelled from a good swordsman ;

Now, in the Rue de la Paix,  
 In a shop-window,  
 A small glass Christ,  
 Fragile and expensive,  
 " A Dainty Christ for the Dressing-table."

# RED BARBARA

by LIAM O'FLAHERTY

WHEN Feeney the fisherman was drowned at sea, Red Barbara, his widow, married a weaver. The weaver came from a distant village, and he had no relatives in our district. It was considered a disgrace that Feeney's widow should marry a weaver who had no relatives. The people also grumbled, saying there would be a smell of urine henceforth in the village, as weavers use it for their looms.

The weaver's name was Joseph. When he arrived he was a young man of thirty. He was strong, well built, with a comely countenance. He had arms like Red Stephen, the blacksmith. His fair hair curled in a straight line over his forehead. He wore black boots, trousers with braces, and a large neck tie with white spots in it. He brought his goods on a cart; his loom and a black wooden trunk with a curved top. The women of the village spoke well of him. It was said by the women that Red Barbara would prosper and have many children.

Joseph was much more civilised than the people of our village. He had lived in a town. He could read and write. He had money in his black trunk. He fried bacon for himself and his wife on Sunday mornings. Soon the people of the village came out of their houses on Sundays before going to Mass in order to smell the bacon; with envy in their nostrils. Life became quite different in the village.

Feeney the fisherman had been a careless drunken man. And his wife, although a beautiful woman, was no better than her husband. Their cottage was dirty, badly thatched, with a rocky yard about it and a bedraggled stone fence. But Joseph immediately hired a stonemason and workmen to rebuild the place. After six months it was quite new and beautiful to behold; a little palace in the centre of the ugly village; a white place on an eminence, with a whitewashed wall of stone and mortar about it. In our district earth is as precious as gold, since we live on barren, rocky land. But Joseph hired labourers with carts to gather the sweepings off the roads and to dig the rich loam from the common marsh below the village. All this was brought to his house with sand from the seashore. With it he made many little gardens about his house where hitherto there had been rock. He made four gardens in all, three behind the house and one in front. And, lo! The front garden was laid out in flower beds, with walks of coloured sea pebbles, like gems, between them; and coping stones of brown granite that glistened in the sun. The people marvelled at his wealth, his industry and his strange genius.

Soon flowers grew there; strange flowers which no one in the village had ever seen, golden daffodils and smiling pansies. Joseph became a great man in the village. No man contradicted him when he spoke.

People came from all parts into the village with thread to be woven into frieze cloth. And the people learned that Joseph's weaving room was not an evil-smelling place but a source of

wonder and delight. He built a sunken room athwart the end of the house, opening off the kitchen. There he set up the loom and worked at his trade. The people crowded into the kitchen to watch him work and hear him talk eloquently in a soft voice of strange places and strange ideas that came into his sombre mind; ideas about the world, about the elements, about God, about animals, birds and fishes; ideas which had never before been heard in the village. His kitchen became a school. And it was wonderful to see the good cloth grow in the loom, like a miracle.

Other men in Joseph's position might have become arrogant and boastful. But Joseph was a modest man, just and kind in his actions and even sombre in his demeanour; like a man of genius. He often read old books that he kept on a wooden shelf.

At the village well in the evenings, when women drew water and chatted, sitting on their heels, Red Barbara became a person of great consequence. They said to her: "It was not in an idle hour that God made your body comely, for you aroused desire in a great and handsome lover." She bowed her head and flushed when they spoke to her thus, knowing that they expected her to be big with child.

Like a strong beast of the wild forest, that is trapped and housed in a cage, and fed in unaccustomed idleness, the beautiful creature was dumbfounded by her new mate and by the luxury that he had brought into her house. Most of all, she was terrified by the strange manner in which he loved her. For she was truly a daughter of our people, primitive in mind and habits, yet with the grace and beauty of a queen among women.

She had a small head, like a snake, but with no malice or subtlety in her large, sleepy, blue eyes. She had long, golden eyelashes and pretty little teeth like a young girl. Her hair was red-gold. Her limbs were long and supple. She walked with a long raking stride, almost sideways, for her slim body swayed voluptuously, like a young tree swaying in the wind. And when she rested she appeared half asleep, without thought; as if she knew she was only made for love and must always wait for and suffer admiration or caresses. Her lips were always half open, her lashes drooped and her little ears, peeping from beneath her red-gold hair, seemed to be perpetually listening for words of admiration.

Yet Joseph terrified her, and after a year she had not yet conceived of him. With Feeney it had been different. They had only been married nine months but on the night she heard of his death she suffered a miscarriage and gave birth to twins. They were dead. He had treated her sometimes with cruelty, but she understood him and was happy as his wife. When he threw her down with violence and embraced her she was content. At other times he fondled her like a child. Often he was drunk and beat her. She used to wait patiently for him in the town, standing in the road outside a tavern, while he got drunk with the neighbours. That was not pleasant, but it was the custom among the people. And she was proud of his rough strength and of his bravery at sea when she saw him approaching the

rock-bound shore in his boat, riding the foam-embroidered sea, with his black chest bare and dripping with brine.

With Feeney she used to utter little screams of joy and laughed with clenched teeth when he approached her in the darkness of night.

Now, with Joseph, a terrible and sombre quiet had fallen on the house, as when the shining priest mumbles on the altar and phantom angels hover invisibly about the incensed church. Indeed, her new house was like a church, spotless, with rich food and strange instruments and flowers about it. And Joseph was like a priest, an educated man who read books and spoke to the people with authority. Although he was more handsome than Feeney and his skin as fair as a lily, she lay under him in terror, supine and trembling, while he murmured soft words to her that sounded like prayers. He touched her gently and showered gifts on her and gave her a mirror to see herself.

Soon her fear turned into hatred, and when he approached her at night she called out in her mind to Feeney to come and drive his boat-hook through this priestly lecher. And she did not conceive of him.

Joseph began to get worried. A year had passed and there was still no sign of the fulfilment of his happiness. He had made this place beautiful and secured for wife a jewel of womanhood in order that his seed might grow in beauty and happiness. At night he told people how life might be improved and how a new race of men could be produced by making the world beautiful. And lo! He whose fair hair curled in a straight line on his forehead like a ram, had no issue. The people began to whisper among themselves, seeing that Red Barbara was still as slim as a filly. They said: "He has arms like Red Stephen the blacksmith, but his loins are barren. For she conceived of Feeney the fisherman." Joseph heard these whispers. He became ashamed and angry. For in our district to be without children is the greatest shame that can come to a man.

However, another year passed before any change was noticed in his behaviour towards his wife or in his sombre calm demeanour. His trade prospered, and his home was now so beautiful that visitors came from afar to look at it on Sundays. And while he was busy perfecting his house and gardens his mind was relieved from contemplation of the fear that had become fixed in his mind. But after two years there was no more to be done. The home was prepared for children and there were none. Then the fear in his mind became active and rebellious. It grew into a red spot and became menacing. His forehead filled with furrows. He became angry at his work and cursed the loom. He threw stones at hens that trespassed in his flower garden. His eyes pursued his wife wherever she went. And when she sat at night near the fire, with her little snake-like, beautiful head motionless, he talked furiously to the assembled neighbours, while the loom rattled and the threads crossed and crossed in frenzied movements. He talked of the world now with outrageous anger and spoke of a purifying spirit that would come to redeem mankind. But the people no longer respected his authority, nor his wisdom, nor his wealth; for his loins were

barren. Among themselves they jibed at him and at his house and flower garden. For all that had lost its novelty, and now it seemed that they had always been there—the wise Joseph and his flowers and his strange ideas. Lustful young men, whose blood sang at the sight of Red Barbara, said with coarse laughter that it was a pity to have her lying in such a bed.

Then one night Joseph was stricken with a frenzy. He seized his wife, shook her, and cried: "How is this, woman? Am I to die childless?" For a few moments she looked at him in amazement. Then she said: "Feeney would not have died childless." Then he struck his forehead like a madman and cursed wildly. She became afraid and lay still, receiving his violent attentions without a word or movement. That lasted for many months without result. A strange look came into his eyes. She became morose and her lips closed over her little white teeth. Then Joseph consulted an old midwife who was wise in ancient cures with herbs and sea-craft. She advised him to put Barbara sitting by the Mermaid's Cave, on the cliff-shore beyond the village, during the height of the Spring tide. He did so and Barbara obeyed, for she feared the strange look in his eyes.

So in the third summer of their marriage she sat each day by the sea, on a round, smooth rock under the towering cliffs beside the dark pool, where the mermaids are said to live and may be heard singing on stormy nights to entice the drowning seafarers to their cave. There the sea air is so strong that it enters the blood with the force of an intoxicating drug. The muscles become stiff. The mind swoons and amorous desires come to life in myriads, born of the vigour of nature. The majesty of the towering dark cliffs and the vast bosom of the smiling soft sea are so potent that even tottering old men are drawn thither by instinct from our village when they see the ghost of death approaching. There they are possessed again by a mirage of strength. They walk naked on the scorched rocks. They are seized with a frenzy and try to lift huge boulders with their wrinkled hands. Then they die in peace.

She grew fat. Joseph rejoiced. That Autumn they said she was big with child. Joseph sang at his work. But as Winter came she grew slim once more. The people laughed. Then Joseph lost his senses one day with rage. He locked the door, took a rod and beat her with it. This time she did not bear with him. She struck him with the tongs on the head and knocked him unconscious. The police came and there was trouble. The parish priest had to come and settle the dispute. Joseph fell ill and was confined to his house all Winter.

Next Spring the people saw him moving about his flower garden, pale and haggard, with twitching forehead and a furtive look in his eyes. Nobody came into the house at night since the quarrel; as it was not considered good taste to visit a house where there was discord. But Red Barbara went abroad speaking solicitously of her husband. And she was continually calling to him in the hearing of the people, telling him to beware of the hot sun and not to walk too far along the cliffs in his weak condition. It seemed that she had somehow asserted mastery

over him. Sometimes she showed her little white teeth in a smile when she passed the young men of the village.

Joseph continued to do his work of weaving cloth. While he worked there alone in his house he talked to himself and his wife sat motionless by the hearth knitting. At night he lay awake in bed watching her. He would put out his trembling hand and touch her beautiful head as it lay beside him, motionless in sleep, covered with red-gold hair.

As Summer passed his appearance became more wild and disordered. He ceased speaking to the neighbours. When they passed him he glared at them. Barbara accepted the thread from the customers, gave them their cloth and collected the money. She was now mistress of the household. Joseph no longer had any interest in those things. He had begun to live among his flowers and among the birds of the air. He spoke to the flowers and bent down and kissed their petals and called them his children. He also brought food with him to the cliffs and scattered it about him; so that the wild sea birds came hovering about his head. Their cries excited him. He stretched out his hands and sang strange rhapsodies of unintelligible words.

That Winter there was snow and frost. Hordes of birds came about the houses begging for food. Joseph took the door off a little outhouse he had built. On the floor he scattered food for the birds and sat there all day, heavily clothed, talking to the birds, inviting them to come in to him. Soon they became tame. They crowded into the little house—birds of many species—starlings, thrushes, blackbirds, robins, sparrows and tiny wrens. Joseph was very happy among them. He lived all day in the outhouse and worked at his loom far into the night. His cheeks became hollow.

But when Spring came the birds flew away to mate. Joseph was alone again. At dawn he heard them sing; and again at sunset, their soft voices floated on the air. The world was full of song. The sun became warm at noon. His enfeebled body became infused with the delirium of Spring. One day he said to his wife softly at noon:

“Lay out my bed on the flagstones on the south side of my house. I am going to lie naked in the sun. I’ll grow strong again. Then you will have children by me.”

Barbara looked at him in amazement at first. His eyes were brilliant with sickness and with the wild visions that sick men see. Her eyes became cunning and she thought:

“He has become an old man. Death is upon him.”

She said nothing, but looked at him shrewdly, like a watching bird. Joseph saw the cunning look in her eyes and became angry. He shook his emaciated fist at her and said:

“Ha! You harlot! You expect my doom. But I will arise as strong as a giant from that bed. Lay it quickly before the sun weakens. Quick or the rod will be laid to your back.”

Then Barbara went out into the yard and wept aloud so that the neighbours could hear her. Joseph followed her out shouting and menacing her with his fists. Neighbours gathered hearing the noise. When she saw that the neighbours had

come Barbara went indoors, while Joseph began to throw stones at the neighbours and shouted to them to go away and not cast their evil eyes on him.

Then Barbara laid out the bed on the flagstones on the south side of the house. Joseph stripped himself naked and lay on the bed. Barbara went among the neighbours and wept, telling them that Joseph had gone mad and threatened to kill her. They all gathered and watched him lying on his back in the sun.

For a long time he lay still, as if he were dead, with his arms and legs stretched out on the white sheets of the bed, with his cheeks bright red and the ghastly pallor of death on his shrunken body. Then the treacherous Spring sun consumed him with its rays and he began to moan. He rose up, staggered, began to wave his arms, and cried in delirium :

“Where is the witch? She has put a spell on me!”

Then he turned around twice, swooned and fell heavily to the bed. The people rushed up and raised him in their arms. He had a face like a corpse. His lips were white, and a little stream issued from them. They brought him into the house, and the village became silent.

He lived for three weeks, raving at times about a spirit that would come to make the world beautiful and to redeem mankind. He also spoke to little children whom he saw about his bed. Then he died one night when the moon was full and the sea made thunder against the southern cliffs. The whole district followed his corpse to the grave, whispering the many wise things he had said to the people.

Then Barbara lived alone for many months in the little white house on an eminence. Weeds choked the flowers that Summer in Joseph's flower garden. There was no sound from the loom, for she dismantled it and threw it into the outhouse that Joseph had built. When Autumn came the house had begun to look bedraggled, as it was when Feeney the fisherman lived there.

Later three young men came over the sea in a boat from a neighbouring island. They had an accordion with them, and they played it in the boat coming over the sea at sunset. They landed at the rocky shore beyond the village and came to Red Barbara's house. People from the village gathered there also. They toasted her red-gold hair and her beautiful limbs in whiskey they had brought. They caroused for three days, praising her beauty. She took one of them for husband, a young dark fisherman, who had wrists like steel.

Years passed and there were children in Barbara's house. And she was a happy woman of the people once more. Again she stood uttering wild cries, on the mound of boulders above the shore while her husband rode the stormy sea in his boat, fighting with death. Again she led him staggering from the town, singing drunkenly, to her wild bed.

Joseph became a fable in the village.

# THREE NIGHTS IN FEZ

by SACHEVERELL SITWELL

It is Ramadan when night is day  
and dull, slow sleep is put away ;  
the horns from their high parapet  
blare and shake the minaret ;  
a wind of cedar and of cypress-wood  
blows sweet on me for my sad mood,  
now my life's climacteric  
has passed and left me cold and sick.

To-night has aged me into sixty years  
so twice too salt are my sad tears,  
yet not enough for all this moonlit night  
you were in Fez who are my eye's delight ;  
I might have been with you, I dreamed it so,  
till the lattice darkened as the moon sank low,  
touching the Atlas with her virgin flame  
as that pale swan among the ibis came.

Till then, the roofs and towers were live  
and nothing spoilt that honey-hive ;  
had Attarine and Seffarine  
been rose-petals or plume's soft sheen  
then they were names, and nothing more,  
but these murmur like the shore :  
what flowers so loud with wings have been  
as Chettarine and Kairouyine ?

They hold all poetry in their name  
yet hide in it a heart of shame ;  
their vaults of gold and honeycomb  
only build a beggar's home ;  
just like a tomb this town within  
has all the wounds and sores of sin,  
among the starving at a shrine  
there lay one heap that could not whine.

This was a leper, and his tongue had gone,  
so died his words as mine have done,  
no throat, no lips, no eyes were kept  
yet to another ghost he crept ;  
so, though I hear not, touch not, see not,  
my gift of tongues, sweet polyglot,  
gives me a thousand words to say  
till the muezzin heralds day.

But only three times might this be  
and then we're lost eternally,  
no more to breathe this cedar-smell,  
or guess what word the fountains spell ;  
how can we be in Fez again,  
this ghost of mine, this summer rain,

oh, can it slake no more than this  
these lips of stone, this marble kiss !

The moon that masks the leper's sores  
huddled with his paramours  
lights me where that evil is  
and leads me to my bed of lilies ;  
there, although it's but a room,  
hidden music marks my doom,  
so will we listen while we look for it  
and make our words its counterfeit.

Tower and terrace are the tombs of sound,  
they hide their music and it's never found,  
so if my ghost, it's all I've got,  
breathes and talks, sweet polyglot,  
meet me in this, if nothing more,  
make this a vault, a corridor,  
where we're tombed, but willingly,  
and let your spirit stay with me.

To no dawn, no sunset, timed  
the fountain's tears, all smooth and rhymed,  
turn their weeping into airs  
till age, itself, is unawares ;  
our half-life that has no ends  
for this absence makes amends,  
how can we count so deep a tide,  
or number what the night has cried !

The trumpets and the music seem  
like whispers from a fading dream,  
the dawn begins, that tree of flowers  
builds against the mosque's green towers,  
these are the ibis, like a cloud  
on the leafless boughs they crowd,  
but their snowy shapes take flight  
when the morning climbs in sight.



## THE ALEMBICS

*by* RICHARD CHURCH

The slow indignities of Time  
Are nothing to our mutual rage.  
We, like martyred bishops, scorn  
Painpricks of external fire ;  
For the harsh purpose of desire  
Crumbles us to creative lime,  
Quick ashes from whose slake is born  
The phoenix beauty ; laughter, curls,  
The loveliness of boys and girls,  
Conch-engendered creatures almost,  
Rich with young worlds, where Time's a ghost.

# J. C. SQUIRE (ETC.)

AN APPRECIATION

by P. R. STEPHENSEN

It would be a mistake to presume that this article is at any point a personal attack upon the editor of the *London Mercury*, or that that functionary is himself herein held up to scorn, ridicule, or contempt; for personal attack presupposes a personality to attack, and J. C. Squire in his public capacity (here alone considered) is not so much a deplorable person as the leading representative of a deplorable type (the critic) in the contemporary world of English letters. The Critic in any age is in a unique position to encourage or to damp creative effort. He is judge and executioner and counsel for the prosecution and defence and Minister of Appeal in the perpetual circuit of Crimes of Passion called *Æsthetic Effort*; he is even Investigation Officer and Keeper of the Records; and it is not surprising if he fails from time to time in one aspect or another of his many-sided calling. Neither is it surprising that he is almost absolutely privileged from attack, so great are his powers of correction. Nevertheless, privilege implies duties, and if I attack J. C. Squire and his breed (or brood) it is above all because they mishandle and so undermine the high authority which is, or ought to be, theirs.

I have not mentioned the Jury, which is in this case even more amorphous and anonymous than the usual good men and women and true, but must nevertheless be awarded the unction of some consideration even by the conglomerate Critical Functionary. God only knows who read all the books published, let alone savour all the critical effluvium released, but the Critics (particularly of the Squire school) seem to act on the assumption that they are writing for a Public somewhere. Modern Criticism may owe its dulness to the fact that the readers of criticism like that sort of thing. The Critics may understand book-readers even if they do not understand book-writers. Let us assume that J. C. Squire (etc.) writes for, and is a favourite with, the Average Cultivated Englishman of To-day.

The conclusion is that the modern cultivated Englishman is a snob, who carries his "culture" very uneasily, and needs to be constantly reminded that Letters is genteel. If so, the modern literary Englishman is very much removed from the notable historical concept "Englishman." From Sir Francis Drake to Sir Alfred Mond (Ex- —) is a definable historical devolution in the type of English merchant adventurer, so much so that it is almost impossible to widen the generic term "Englishman" to include the two; and it may be that similar historical circumstances explain the decline from Dryden and Dr. Johnson to Squire and (say) MacCarthy in the world of literary criticism. What Drake was to Elizabethan life so Mond is to us in Commerce, and perhaps similarly we deserve to have Squire as our arch-type of Literary Critic—so dispersed has English culture become.

The sombre fact remains that, Walkeley and Gosse being dead, J. C. Squire is now the leading English critic. For example, the fact that the *Sunday Times* could only think of the colourless and soporific MacCarthy as a successor to dear old vigorous Sir Edmund, is in itself an indication that there is no serious rival to Squire for the crown of Dr. Johnson; and assuming at once (which will later be demonstrated) that Squire's critical faculty is negligible, a necessary sigh is indicated at this point for the passing of a fine tradition in English letters: the tradition of Constructive Criticism; and we must regard Squire as a symptom, not so much of self-frustration and colourlessness (though he is all that) as a symbol of the contemporary decline in literary vitality which could allow eminence to a critic of such negligible attainments.

The contemporary Englishman, for whom Squire writes, is interested above all in preserving the amenities of Oxford and of Waterloo Bridge. He is also interested in reprints, particularly of the minor (respectable) poets and essayists of the past, provided such minor poets and essayists are duly (and dully) included in the standard text-books of "literature" dear to the souls of University Professors and Research Students in "English." He also dislikes references to copulation in art. In other words, the man is a Middle-class Snob, commercially self-made perhaps, still somewhat conscious of what differentiates him ("culture") from his social inferiors; and very very securely tribal in his sexual code. Squire is just the man for him, and he is just the man for Squire.

This will be realised more clearly if we recall Dryden's tribute to Shakespeare. ("He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul,") as the kind of reality in criticism of which the contemporary lion is utterly incapable. The point is not that the amenities of Waterloo Bridge and the Minor Classics are unworthy of any mention in criticism; it is that such frivolities should not be constituted the *ultima ratio* of criticism. It is above all that criticism should be synthetic, should define and re-define the growth of contemporary æsthetic consciousness, as Dryden did in the "Essay on Dramatick Poesie"; and though we can hardly blame Squire for being no Dryden, we can at least absolve ourselves from the error of conceding him the place of a Dryden. And we can permit ourselves to regret that contemporary criticism has no worthier successor than Squire in the line from Dryden to Gosse.

Squire does not stand alone, as the great critics have always stood alone, distinctive in mannerism and mind. He is an Apotheosis of the Average, and there could be no more humiliating reflection upon our taste in these matters than that all modern criticism should be poured in and out of one mould (Squire's mould), so that exactly the same kind of criticism appears everywhere. On any Sunday morning we may read a column-and-a-half by Squire in the *Observer*, and a column-and-a-half by MacCarthy in the *Sunday Times*; and it is humiliating to reflect that either of these articles might have been written by Squire or by MacCarthy. It would really

not be noticed if the postman inadvertently delivered Squire's article to the *Sunday Times*, and MacCarthy's article to the *Observer*; (or for that matter if Messrs. Freeman, Shanks and Priestly, jointly or separately deputed on an odd Sunday, in either of the prime articles in question). Both would have been written with an urbane detachment from living values in literature; both would have been written at a low blood-pressure; both would smell stalely of "culture," and both would be quite boring.

God only knows how it happened, but the fact remains that Squire and MacCarthy are now the deans of English criticism. Each has a flatulent column-and-a-half on Sunday, and a dull literary monthly of his own. If Squire should pass away, MacCarthy would take his place, and if MacCarthy, then Freeman, or Shanks, or Priestly, or somebody like that. It is difficult to avoid a sigh. Somebody has killed Cock Robin. Somebody has forgotten *MacFlecknoe* and the *Dunciad* and the lampoonists of an illustrious past in English literary criticism. Somebody has forgotten how Byron put 'em on ice. We have become very cultivated indeed. Very "cultivated."

Perhaps it is all a matter of Taste. The educated Englishman, the Etonian, the Oxford Man, is more or less a gentleman in all his public relationships, however much a cad, a lecher, or a scoundrel he may be in his private soul. The only objective explanation of the modern type of literary criticism is that it endeavours to conform somehow to the background of manners which characterises the Englishman (of a Better Type) in public. Sneering is always polite, sexual candour is tabu and abhorrent, allusions are preferably recondite, any manifestation of vigour is deprecated, the pose is urbanity, sophistication, a metropolitan self-assurance. In order not to give offence, polemical expressions of definite opinion are avoided, save when Everybody would approve (*e.g.* an attack upon bawdiness). Better still, what is potentially objectionable is simply not mentioned. It is all very safe and sane, polite and cowardly; and, however excellent it may be as a frictionless code of Social behaviour, it is merely a senile decay in criticism if it intrudes itself there, as it has. Explicitly or implicitly it is the standard of taste prevailing at a (mixed) Bridge Party or a well-bred dinner which finds its expression or serves as an excuse in the literary causeries of a Squire reviewer. The result is a kind of pleasantly soothing writing, non-committal mostly, and indubitably urbane; which only occasionally becomes a clear statement of opinion, when calling for the repression of some book containing words which could outrage the sexual tabus of a dinner-party given by, say, the late Mr. Gladstone.

Three instances in point are given from the life and writings of J. C. Squire himself, though others could be produced from the texts of minor disciples of the same, such as Mr. James Douglas. It is necessary to quote Mr. Squire somewhat extensively to reveal Mr. Squire. Of Lascelles Abercrombie's wonderfully fresh Greek lyrical play, *Phanix*, he wrote (*Mercury*, February, 1924) as follows:

However played, *Phœnix* would have been disgusting. As well make *The Cenci* into a comedy. The author appeared not to know what he was driving at, or to have a very imperfect conception of his principal character, Rhodope, who was an impossible mixture of the light wanton, the hot sensualist, and the cold calculating harlot. And even had he been sure what he was doing, his light treatment of such a plot—a mother setting her son to cut her husband in the “affections” of a whore—would have been revolting.\* The “strong” language in places did not offend; but the whole thing seemed like the made-up attempt to be bold and violent of a naturally gentle and studious man. Yet, as I said, this abominable and unconvincing farce did show a gift for the stage.

The following month he declaimed as follows:—

It is a relief to think that the bold spirits of the Phœnix Society, having now done the filthiest play they could have found, cannot go to such lengths again . . . (Wycherley’s) beastliness of mind and his banality of style are seen at their worst in his miscellaneous poems; his plays are, in places, amusing, but only in the same way as farces of our own day, which intellectuals take no notice of . . . Even great artistic mind will not cover everything; when that is absent there is no case at all for revival of plays foul in thought and disgusting in expression. At moments one thought it would be for the credit of the stage if actors and actresses, who cannot entirely divest themselves of their personalities, were to strike rather than consent to soil their lips in public with words like Wycherley’s. Mr. Montague Summers, who wrote the notes on the programme with his customary raciness and erudition, remarked that “Extraordinary as the fact may seem,” a performance in 1748 was the last in England of this play (in its original form) until 1924. It isn’t extraordinary at all. Until the Phœnix Society came into existence, nobody for two centuries had the bad taste and brazen effrontery to put the thing on.

—and as recently as June of the present year, he outburst thus about Isadora Duncan’s “Life”:—

The baring of “the soul,” and even of the body, which is to be found in this book is nothing out of the ordinary . . . and this unhappy, rather innocent, rather attractive woman had not a very interesting soul to bare. We are not even quite sure about the body . . . in point of fact she was not a great dancer and not a very beautiful woman . . . She has in a manner, told the truth; but not when she thought she was telling it. And the truth is hardly worth learning.

These three jaundiced utterances have only to be examined in juxtaposition to the screech journalism of Britain’s principal moral tripehound, James Douglas, of the *Sunday Express* (“I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel”) to make it quite clear that J. C. Squire is hardly of importance as a serious critic of letters, for the

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\* Compare *Troilus and Cressida*

• PROLOGUE :

Their vow is made  
To ransack Troy within whose strong immures  
The ravish’d Helen, Menelaus’ Queen,  
With wanton Paris sleeps. . . .

ACT II. SCENE 3 :

*Thersites* : All the argument is a cuckold and a whore.

moralist's howl is not, and never has been, relevant in the estimation of artistic endeavour—a point which, one would have thought, has been assimilated into man's experience in these matters by now. In brief, Mr. Squire, Sir, Abercrombie's *Phoenix* is not "disgusting," it is not "abominable," it is not "revolting," it is not "unconvincing" even; and you are an impertinent fellow to use these adjectives publicly in disparagement of a work of art which it seems you are unable to comprehend. And if you think Wycherley's plays are "foul in thought and disgusting in expression"; and if you have so little taste as to say of a genuine artist, Isadora Duncan, that she was not a great dancer, and that she was not a very beautiful woman, and that the truth about her is "hardly worth learning," then it is time somebody went for you with a typewriter or other weapon; it is time to ring down the curtain upon the "abominable and unconvincing" farce of your own literary hegemony.

Need we consider here the distinction between the literary public of J. C. Squire and the unliterate public of James Douglas? It should be evident that neither Wycherley's Cavalier wantonness, nor Abercrombie's Hellenic sense of humour, nor poor Isadora's experimental Dionysiacs could possibly corrupt the morals or sexual habits of the great British public which reads the *Sunday Express*, because in the first place this public has no time or money to read anything else except such literature as that contained in the crime, accident, political, "society" causerie, crossword and advertising columns of its own, its very own newspapers; in the second place its morals are already corrupted by the bathing beauties and daily "leg" pictures in these sanctimonious organs of opinion; and finally because the Million Readers could not possibly understand Wycherley, Abercrombie, or even Isadora, not even if legislation were passed (shall we say by Jix?) to make the reading of these works compulsory and universal. The morals and sexual habits of the backbone of the nation are for ever secure from any literary undermining. Neither could the three works in question possibly corrupt the few thousand literati of the English-speaking world, for anyone with intelligence enough to read and understand them, would also presumably be sufficiently balanced in mind to have tamed the stud bull within him, far beyond the possibility of pornographical titillation by the strongest æsthetic image of lust.

Whom then does J. C. Squire wish to protect in attacking works of this kind? Himself? The readers of the *London Mercury*, or the readers of the *Sunday Express*? Does he mean eventually to do James Douglas out of a job? And what is the difference between the moral lion of a Million Readers and the moral lion of a chaste literary monthly?

I insist that Squire's lack of taste and lack of balance utterly unfit him for the position of leading English critic. Were he to exercise his enthusiasm for reprints of minor text-book classics in praising works by men like Abercrombie, and Huxley, and Norman Douglas; and were he to use his occasional gift of vituperation against, for example, the dull

theorising of novelists like Wells, and the sounding emptiness of poets like Humbert Wolfe, he would at least be doing some credit to the name of critic. As a person, of course, he cannot be blamed for being other than he is. He began as a poet of sorts (and even of promise), funk'd the creative tussle and turned to parody and burlesque for release, thence degenerated by an easy declivity to his present rôle of destructive critic. All this is as it must be, and some years hence it will not matter.

Absolutely it does not matter now, for vital creative work will go on despite the obstruction of the official gang; but no man ploughing the hard furrow of creative effort should be open to the insults and calculated opposition of such trivial fellows as the modern critics. It is enough to have to face one's own problem in morality and construction without being judged by the bitterest pharisaical standards and publicly exposed as a corrupter of the law. Two instances of actual obstruction by critics will make the point clearer. Abercrombie, after Squire's nasty and insinuating attack upon *Phoenix*, seems to have been quite discouraged, and this "naturally gentle and studious man" submerged himself in professorial work and town-planning. Aldous Huxley, after his splendid beginning with works like *Leda*, *Antic Hay*, and *Crome Yellow*, all most wickedly mis-reviewed, seems to have been sufficiently sensitive to atavistic attack to have despondently turned out *Barren Leaves* and worse, *Jesting Pilate*, the titles of which at least indicate some strong measure of cynical despair on the part of this uniquely vital mind. As a further example of present-day critical inadequacy, it is only necessary to recall that the finest English work of two decades, *South Wind*, was almost completely ignored at publication, and to this day has its spontaneous recognition only in America and Overseas: a fact which almost leads one to the opinion that the centre of English culture has dispersed itself so much over the earth that English culture now has no centre, London being merely a place where books are manufactured.

Works like *South Wind*, *Phoenix*, and *Antic Hay* are the affirmation of all that is noblest and most alive in the English mind of to-day. When they are attacked or ignored, the fact of critical obliquity is indicated; when they make their way, despite the critics, critical obliquity is proved.

If there is any point in this article (which is quite in bad taste, by the way), it is that the art of reviewing died with Gosse as its last exponent. There is not a single reviewer of to-day worthy to take a place in the highest ranks of English tradition in criticism, and Squire as the best of them least of all.

Whether this be due to a developing triviality in modern journalism which extends to the literary columns, or whether it be due to the nerve-destroying mass-production of books with which reviewers are confronted; or whether it be due to a capitalistic policy of "log-rolling" in the capitalist industry of advertising and selling books; or whether it be due to some defect of character (spinelessness) in the critics themselves; or whether the cultivated Englishman of to-day gets the guidance he expects (and deserves) from reviewers, I am not prepared

to say. I merely insist here that criticism is a lost art if Squire is its chief exponent. It is important that creative work should have the stimulus of a criticism from constructive critical minds which are born to the job, and if artists are to be rebuked, the rebuke must come sympathetically, however harsh it may be.

Actually, the norm of criticism to-day is established by essentially frustrated men like Squire; or by mere journalistic pot-boilers whose livelihood depends upon writing down, mentally and morally to the level of the greatest number; or by newly-fledged Honoursmen anxious to get a leg in by modelling themselves quickly upon the established style. The criticism which results is worthless, as a guide either to readers or writers of books. When it nastily disparages effort it may be a serious if temporary brake upon the best work of the day. And it must be an obstruction to publishers, when its instinctively wrong emphasis influences them in their choice of what to print.

Is it too much to expect that a breed of critics will again be evolved in England with the guts to praise and to attack, but above all to evaluate contemporary æsthetic effort in some perspective to the modern problem of living? Without any cowardly predilection for the obscure text-books issued to soothe the already calm souls of professors? Without commercial prestidigitation? Without any consideration for the moral automatism, already quite secure, of the greatest number? —Is this too much to expect? Never mind. Creative work will go on somehow, and the Squire type of critic meanwhile provides a kind of criterion, willy-nilly. Whatever it attacks is almost certain to be worth further investigation.

Finally, James Douglas has now actually succeeded in getting a book suppressed. Squire has approvingly commented that the whole nature, objects, and sanctions of morality are involved. There is a solid block between these two field-preachers. Must the struggle for freed expression be fought all over again?

# SALUT D'AMOUR

by ANNA WICKHAM

If we could clear a space and there contest—  
Clear all the squirrels from our tilting-ground—  
Banish the robin and his bloody vest,  
Not have too many bats and bears around—  
In my benign and not inept view—  
A creditable battle would ensue.

# ANOTHER GODIVA

by T. F. POWYS

MR. DIBBEN, the curate in charge of Little Madder, had one wish in his heart, and that wish was to give the village a new playground. All things he knew were possible to God, and some things, he fancied, were possible to a rather long, lean and freckled curate.

Mr. Dibben possessed red hair, his face was sallow, and those loose members of his body—his legs and arms—were as unwieldy as though they had belonged to Dr. Johnson himself.

Mr. Dibben had one great idea, which was that outdoor games do both exercise the body and purge and purify the inward mind. Dances, too, upon the green sward, and such like happy merriment, Mr. Dibben would affirm can do no harm.

"Satan," he said, "had always disliked a concertina, and, if only old John Goddy had a field to play in, the Devil would never have followed Minnie Masters into Byepath meadow."

Mr. Dibben believed that if he could only persuade old Lord Bullman—whose head was near as thick as one of his own prize steers—to give the field, old John would play, the nimble ball be bowled and batted, children would skip and leap, and, towards evening, the dancers would come. Mr. Dibben believed that he had only to ask—and receive.

Mr. Dibben went to the Squire and asked for the field. He was ashamed, he said, to speak to so great a nobleman upon so little a matter. Mr. Dibben blushed meekly and awaited the answer.

"No," replied Lord Bullman, "we must not demoralise the poor, for you may be sure, Dibben, that if I give them the field, and charge a shilling a year for it as you suggest,—they'll play football upon a Sunday."

"But even that game, my lord," replied Mr. Dibben modestly, "played upon the Sabbath, would be more nice and proper than what they do now down Love's lane."

"Will you kindly remember, sir," said Lord Bullman, sternly, "that our forefathers lost America, and that we lack soldiers."

Mr. Dibben turned away, ashamed. He walked sadly to the Rectory. On his way there he passed old John Goddy, who was leaning over Farmer Lord's sty, playing to the pigs.

At the Rectory Mr. Dibben remembered that Milton had used a swing with which to amuse and exercise himself in his back garden. Though the Squire possessed the earth, Mr. Dibben believed that the air was the people's. Upon the village green there was a fine oak; Mr. Dibben hung a swing upon one of its branches.

The swing was a great success, and the only gloomy voice on the subject was Lord Bullman's, who addressed Mr. Dibben after the Sunday service, and told him that one day he'd be sorry he hung it there.

The swing did a little to prevent certain wanderers from

visiting Love lane; the people enjoyed it; but of course, Mr. Dibben knew that, the excitement over, this new toy would soon go, and he still hoped for the field.

A little while after Mr. Dibben hung up the swing, Lord Bullman married his young bride, whose name was Godiva. He had already buried three of them, and so she was his fourth. Godiva was only twenty; she looked such a young, meek thing at the Altar that Mr. Dibben couldn't help sighing three times very sadly when the service was ended.

But he had another reason for his sighs than that Lord Bullman had married such a fair and lovely young girl, for the people of Little Madder were growing tired of the swing. The young men and maids, instead of spending the Sunday evening harmlessly in swinging, deserted this pastime and wandered down the wanton lane again. Mr. Dibben wished for the playing-field more than ever . . . . .

One Sunday in July, after the evening service, the curate happened to notice on his way from the Church to the Rectory that the swing was being used again. Evidently some village girl was swinging upon it. Mr. Dibben was glad,—the summer was glad, too, and all the little gnats—for the evening was very still—were dancing with delight.

Mr. Dibben looked anxiously; no one seemed to be swinging this young girl. But there she certainly was, in a white frock, pulling the ropes and kicking out her legs so that she kicked them into the leaves above her. Mr. Dibben strode down to the oak, his cassock flapping against his legs. He came to the swing and saw the Lady Godiva . . . . .

The next day a small boy was playing in the lane, because there was nowhere else for him to play, and a motor car, passing swiftly by, knocked him into the hedge and broke his leg. A little later a bull, that had got loose, tossed a tiny girl who was innocently spinning her top in the road. These accidents determined Mr. Dibben to make another attempt to get the field from the squire.

Hoping to find the Lady and Lord Bullman at home, Mr. Dibben took out a clean collar from his drawer, dressed himself in his sleekest coat, and walked with a long stride from the Vicarage to the Hall.

The walk was pleasant, but it was a little spoilt for Mr. Dibben, because everywhere the children played in the lane and, having no daisies to throw at one another, they threw stones instead. For the Madder children had grown tired of the swing.

Mr. Dibben found the Lord and Lady at tea upon a fair lawn that resembled the softest green carpet. Mr. Dibben respectfully took a chair that the manservant—an old and wise retainer—had placed next to Godiva's.

Mr. Dibben was eloquent, he had his subject not only upon his tongue, but in his heart too. He said how happy are all those who play games in a green meadow. He enlarged the subject. He spoke in praise of dancing and cricket, of ring-a-ring o' roses, and ninepins.

While Mr. Dibben talked, the Lady Godiva watched him

silently. His animated look, his raised head showed her that his cause was just, and that she ought to espouse it. The lady looked at her husband, who was glum and gloomy, while Mr. Dibben, his colour heightened, his heart on fire, appeared to her to be a saviour of the people.

As soon as Mr. Dibben finished his pleading, he threw himself upon his knees before the squire and, with his hands clasped, he begged for the gift to the village of the playground. He had hardly knelt a moment when he was aware that the Lady Godiva was kneeling beside him and mingling her entreaties with his own words.

They remained in this posture when the servant came to remove the tray, but he, having lived all his life in the oldest families, had learnt, while performing his own duties, to notice nothing.

Lord Bullman looked sternly at his wife.

"If," he said, "on next Sunday at one o'clock you ride naked in the oak tree swing, I will give the field to the village."

Mr. Dibben flushed in righteous anger and stood up.—The Lady Godiva laughed.

"Oh, I shan't mind that," she said, "for, of course, Mr. Dibben will tell all the people to remain at home."

"Remember Coventry," said Lord Bullman, rising and strolling to the house.

Lady Godiva turned to Mr. Dibben.

"Where am I to undress?" she asked.

"You have only, madam," Mr. Dibben replied, "to climb into the oak tree and the leaves will protect you."

"My new maid, Mrs. Flew, can't climb trees," observed the lady, "and someone must be there to see if my curls are tidy."

"I will attend you myself, blindfold," said Mr. Dibben, "for I know I can climb."

"Then you won't see my curls," laughed the lady.

"I can feel them," replied Mr. Dibben.

In order to fancy how she would look nakedly swinging, Lady Godiva stood at the large dining-room window, where it was agreed Lord Bullman should stand to see the meadow lost or won.

"One could only just see from here that a person was naked, and that's all," said Godiva.

Lord Bullman shrugged his shoulders.

"Quite enough for me," he said grimly.

Before the Sunday came Mr. Dibben called together the people and explained to them the hard conditions by which the field might be won.

"I feel sure," he said, "that everyone will be loyal to the lady and keep indoors, and that those who live near to the oak will pull down their blinds, while I alone will assist the lady to climb the tree and then blindfold my eyes. It is proper that I should be there," said Mr. Dibben with dignity, "for the little red squirrel who lives in the oak is very naughty and inquisitive."—And then Mr. Dibben told the story of Coventry.

"How many peeping Toms were there?" asked a voice when he had done.

"Only one," replied Mr. Dibben . . . . .

The day in which the nice behaviour of the village was to be so dangerously tested soon came, and Lady Godiva, looking extremely pretty in a white frock with a black ribbon round her neck, walked boldly to the green, where she was joined by Mr. Dibben who held a large red handkerchief in his hand. Both climbed into the tree together.

The whole of Madder was entirely empty when the two climbed into the tree, but, as soon as they were safely within the hidden shelter of the lofty boughs, all the population came out of their doors as if for a festival and surrounded the oak.

Up amid the boughs, Godiva, with a swiftness and grace that are easy to imagine—and immensely admired by the naughty little squirrel—slipped out of her garments, while Mr. Dibben, with his eyes tightly bandaged, listened for danger.

"Oh!" cried Godiva, swinging airily upon a high bough. "Oh, do look, Mr. Dibben, for I believe all the village is here."

Mr. Dibben, hearing her sudden call and forgetting, in the excitement of the moment, why he had bandaged his eyes, pulled off his handkerchief and looked at Godiva.

"Ah!" sighed Mr. Dibben, "what loveliness!"

Godiva pouted.

"To look at me isn't going to be any help to get the playground, Mr. Dibben," she said. "And to be sure I'm not going down the tree to swing before all that horrid crowd in this condition."

Mr. Dibben looked at her angrily.

"With the playing-field so nearly won," he called, "and with me looking at you, what have you to be ashamed of? You know you're only a woman."

"A pretty one, please, Mr. Dibben," murmured the lady.

"I don't mean that the young people should lose this pleasure because of your prudish nonsense," he said.

The Lady Godiva climbed lightly a little nearer to Mr. Dibben; she whispered something into his ear.

"He will never know the difference all this way off," she said.

Mr. Dibben groaned.

"It will be deceiving my lord," he said.

"That won't matter," observed she.

"Immodest woman!" cried Mr. Dibben despairingly . . . .

The good people below were, as we may well expect, all impatient for the show. They peered up at the hidden arbour of leaves, expecting every moment a pair of the whitest and prettiest legs in the world to descend cautiously.

But, as time went on, they began to be a little impatient and, although John Goddy played many a merry tune to them to keep them happy, yet there were those who said that a lady needn't take quite so long to undress, even though she was in a tree.

One boy, whose name happened to be Tom, was bold

enough to climb upon the lowest branch of the oak, in order, so he said, "to help the lady into her seat when she came."

When one has looked for a long time for something expected, that something generally arrives with unexpected suddenness. Just as naughty Tom happened to look, for one moment, towards the ground, a nude figure stepped, or rather fell out of the oak, and in one instant sprang upon the swing with so much fury that it swung high, and, in the descent, Tom received a kick that not only injured his eyesight, but broke his head, too.

The spectators turned away. The fury of the swinger passed all proper bounds. The swing appeared to be driven by a whirlwind.

John Goddy closed his eyes, tucked his concertina under his arm and whistled.

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TWO POEMS

by STANLEY SNAITH

I. GALATEA TO PYGMALION

SEE, I have shuddered away this wintry dress
Of stillness, nascent impulse flies to my hands;
The heart is summoned to its appointed office
Moonlike to queen a round of orderly tides,
And usher into the harbour of the mind
A various marketry (for thought must starve
If blood deny its natural bounty).
Within my body instinct runs like music,
Instructing vein and nerve in their grave duty,
Muscles to flex in concord, limbs to move
Seeingly, uprightly, true to their pivot.
Now shall the body be trothèd to the mind,
Motived and disciplined thence by easy rule,
Instantly swift or still at that dictate;
Till thought and action are one compasspoint
Veering susceptibly to the poles of will.
It shall find rhythm and process, and the wisdom
Whereby to cleanse, nourish, renew itself,
And hoard its sweets from the grim levies of Time.
Body, that else were shut in truceless frost,
Paupered of motion, smitten in one gesture,
Is free, is fetterless as wind or water.
For body is not perfected until it lives
And knows its perfectness; from that first birth
When it puts forth the quavering senses, gropes
In strange environs, responds to new strange contacts,

Till, waxing more audaciously aware,
 It winnows sound from odour, savour from touch,
 That the senses may no longer outstrip knowledge,
 And finds a harmony with the enclosing world,
 It is completing its identity.
 You know, Pygmalion, how lovingly built
 And postured is my body,
 Who dreamed this symmetry ere you touched the stone;
 But here are contours that your patient tool
 That haggled shape out of a thrawn rock
 Never conceived. Stone takes a rigored grace;
 But flesh, this secular sweetness, this conscious tissue,
 Newbudded, not drudged at by some lackeying womb,
 Wears form's authentic impress yet undried.
 From neck to breasts the calm and breathing line
 Wavers like water, a carven fluid of line,
 Then lapses supply down
 In one long lucid sweep past loins and thigh
 To the small feet that yet trustily bear
 The balance of the motionable trunk.
 See, if I move I send new symmetries
 Gliding over my flesh like a bird's shadow:
 On movement's matrix coin myself anew.
 Am I not lovely to behold?
 Am I not meet for marrying clasps?
 Then lift me from the pedestal, Pygmalion.

II. THE LIVING ROD

THEN the rod suddenly stammered in my hand,
 And dipt and dragged as if urgently summoned;
 And as I struck
 The barren rock was quickened with abundance—
 As if milk visited an unchilded breast.
 We gazed in wonderment and a sweet fear
 While the rock babbled forth its cloudy brew,
 And loosened down its burning flank
 (Never so silverly trodden)
 A music and a crimpling light of water
 That darted flecks and fingers this way and that.
 No earthly essence is so crafty of solace,
 Or thus cajoles the tongue;
 For as we crused it in our hands, and steeped
 Our stonied mouths therein,
 Our hunger faded, our flesh was purified,
 And a new tranquil purpose gathered our hearts.
 Now definitely I know that God has pledged
 An unexamined regence to this rod:
 I can engender life that none may balk;
 Can fire a drop of rain with populous force,
 Or make a rock articulate; and so
 I fall on humble knees
 Vowing obedience in my kingliness.

BLACK BILL'S FRIENDSHIP

by NORMAN LINDSAY

IN the stagnating heat of this tropic night, the ship was a pest-house of foul smells and fever-ridden bodies. About her littered decks, bedraggled with uncoiled ropes and unwove rigging—the mark of a ship's evil conscience—the crew lay in a drugged parody of sleep, compounded of rum, fever, and the overmastering heat. Only on the poop two figures remained upright, talking in sullen whispers.

"Ain't two of us enough to do it," said one. "Ain't you an' me good enough for one man, an' him old and drunk?"

The other spat contemptuously down on the carved quarter gallery, indicating thereby his opinion of question and questioner. He was a handsome, bull-necked ruffian, defying the tropic heat in the stained finery of a cocked hat and gold-laced jacket.

"Stow your gab," said he. "If it was on'y the old man to put under, d'yer think I'd want *your* help, Scoby Green?"

He threw out his chest, bestowing its fine arch in scorn on the other's meagre proportions. Scoby Green's little shifty eye evaded its arrogance. Accident had already given him an air of repudiating all grand gestures, by a sword cut down one cheek which twitched his features into a perpetual sneer.

"You're Mate," was all he said. "Go on talkin'."

"Ay, I'll do the talkin', an' the thinkin', an' the orderin', too. If I have a fancy for Black Bill, why, my fancy's good enough reason for a scab like you."

Scoby Green allowed this mandate to pass in silence, leaning on the taffrail, while the mate, breathing his dictatorship in another expansive gesture, moved down the poop-ladder and across the quarter-deck, peering as he went at the huddled shapes about him.

His quest ended at an enormous figure sprawling on the main deck, with its head resting on the wheel of a gun-carriage, and its feet hanging out of the gun-port. It was naked to the waist, and from a tangled mat of hair and beard, it breathed a species of muffled thunder.

Repeated thrusts of the mate's foot at length aroused this organism to life, and raising its immense head, it stared bemusedly at the disturber of its rest. An old stocking was twisted about its head, and in the dim light, only the whites of its eyes rolled fearfully in the sun-blackened and bearded area that was its face.

Another kick carried what vague intelligence was needed to bring it upright and, at the mate's signal, follow lumberingly to the poop.

It seemed that the purpose of this gathering was already understood between the three, for the mate had only one special instruction for Black Bill.

"You understand your duties, Bill," he said. "Nip him

by the throat quick. We don't want no screamin' in the dark, drunk as them crowd is."

Black Bill merely rolled his eyes, seeming to give his thumbs a preparatory polish on the canvas knee-skirt belted about him in place of breeches. His fixed scowl was automatic, implying no special attention to the business in hand. He rolled it indiscriminately at the mate and at the ship's lantern, as objects demanding an equal stress in laborious comprehension. Docile as a great black bear, he followed the others down the poop companion-way.

What they had to do there was not long in doing; a business despatched somewhat more easily than the labour of its discussion. When they appeared again, it was by the quarter gallery alley-way, and they bore with them a heavily bound iron-shod chest.

"Handy, now," whispered the mate. "Pass me the end o' that t'gallant sheet, and bring them bread bags and water bottles alongside, Scoby Green. Overboard with you, Bill, the skiff's moored to the mizzen chains."

Working swiftly, and in silence, chest, bags, and bottles were lowered to the boat below, and slipping one after another into the mizzen shrouds, the mate and Scoby Green followed. On deck, no one stirred, and only the water, black and oily, flopped lazily as the boat slid under the ship's counter, and away into the dark.

This estuary of the sea ran narrowly between shores choked with overgrowth and undergrowth, where decaying vegetation tainted the air with a rank sweetness, save when an oar stirred its black mud in the shallows, and then the smell was acrid and pestilent. Clouds of mosquitos covered its surface, filling the ears with an incessant drone, and adding a torment to the flesh. But the three, long pickled in the fever-ports of these seas, drove the boat steadily onwards, bearing its talisman against all discomforts of the body.

For an hour the mate and Black Bill rowed silently, while Scoby Green sat at the tiller, craning his neck always towards the right shore, as if fearful of missing a landmark in the dark.

"Go easy a bit," he said at length. "It's here or hereabouts, if a man could see in this Hell's kitchen"—

For a period the boat loitered forward till Scoby Green turned her nose shoreward, and with some fumbling in the dark, found the entrance to a creek, into which they forced a passage, till the keel stuck above water level.

"She'll do here," said the mate. "Give the hawser a twist round that root, Scoby Green, and bring along the bread bags. Me an' Bill takes the box."

It was a black business, tugging that unhandy weight through the undergrowth, and its cursing fell upon Green, who led the way. This, in the end, brought them to a clearing, where stood the remains of a mud hut, roofless and abandoned.

"Was I right, then, or was I not?" said Scoby Green, indicating the hut as one who expected to be defrauded of a special virtue in its discovery.

"You was right," said the mate, mopping his face. "And

a good thing for you, Scoby Green, that you was. And a good thing for you you happen to be the one man aboard that knowed this country."

"Else I wouldn't be here," sneered Scoby bitterly.

"Else you'd be in Hell, before you got your fingers on that gold," said the mate frankly. He pulled a bottle from his pocket, drank, and handed it to Black Bill, malevolently wiping his lips in Scoby Green's face.

As for Bill, he drank, rolling his eyes in blank ferocity at these meaningless gestures, which were for him but the shadow-play of an incomprehensible world.

By dawn, the chest was gutted of its treasure, and this rolled tightly in strips of bread bag, knotted with hemp rovings, and looped together at the ends, that they might be worn bandolier-wise across the body. There were six of these, and their combined weight would have well burdened a horse.

Then said the mate, with a special eye on Scoby Green.

"I'm the lord here, and by rights, and justice, this gold's mine. But I ain't greedy; far from it. This gold's for them that carries it, and the more you carries, the more you gets."

Scoby Green sprang up in a rage. "That's your law, is it to cut me out o' my doo share?" he cried. "An' me the only one that knows the country. Carry the bloody stuff yourself, then, and find your way to Hell with it, for I won't move a step, without it's understood we all shares equal."

"You're here now, and here you'll stay," said the mate. "An' what you carries you gets, no more or less. Here's Bill, the strongest, gets double weight, and double shares, as is fair justice."

He doled out four of the rolls to Bill, under the starting eyes of Scoby Green.

"You mean to say he gets *three times* what I do," he gasped.

"That's what I mean to say," said the mate. "Walkin's your job, not carryin'. A man that never was more than a pig's whisper at the end of a rope ain't worth extra rations. There's your share, equal with mine, and if you can't carry it, damme, it's extra weight for Bill or me, an' extra spendin's at the end of it."

Scoby Green licked his thin lips, his little eyes darting from roll to roll, in those agonies of computation especially designed for dry and avaricious souls. Then, as the mate adjusted his own bandolier of gold, and made an offer at the last one also, Scoby snatched at it in a sullen fury, bracing about his meagre body a weight which already bent it double.

As for Black Bill, he made no effort to account for the mass of gold before him, other than to reach out a great hairy arm, and toss the bandoliers one by one about his body, as rather to test their lightness than their weight. Perhaps there was something puzzled in the glare that went from them to the mate, and something computative in the way he rubbed them at intervals with his thumb, as approving the quality of their texture.

One hundred miles of country lay between them and Los Palamas; one hundred miles of swamp, forest, mud, rock, sand

and desert as the price ordained by the Good God of Scoundrels for the reward of riot in stews and taverns.

For five days these heroic denizens of hell made their itinerary through an essence of its torments; wading through bog to the waist; struggling for foothold in treacherous mud that sucked with a monstrous intention at their feet; driving their bodies through choked undergrowth, that offered insensate resistance; breathing an air humid to the point of asphyxiation; and poisonously bitten by clouds of insects. Even to the mate's powerful organism, it was a test in exhaustion. The veins knotted to bursting point in his neck and forehead, his face was a patch-work in blue and purple, and his eye smouldered hatred for these malignant obstacles to the achievement of debauch. His one resource, in special passages of stress was to spit curses at Scoby Green, who led this itinerary in hell, and who became, by a natural antipathy, the symbol of its torments.

These insults passed unheard in the tortured progress of Scoby Green.

Pinched and yellow faced, the breath wrestling for release in his exhausted lungs, his lips rimmed with black saliva, he was a corpse held upright by an indomitable lust, his fixed glare turned always to the monstrous injustice of Black Bill's share of treasure, one pound's weight of which would have dragged him to the earth. Only a spiritual frenzy of cupidity kept him in pace with the others, else must he have died a hundred times under the lash that kept his miserable carcass upright.

As for Black Bill, he seemed to stride on untouched by these agonies of melting tissue, aching bones, distended sinews, and flesh parched by unholy exhalations of sweat. Perhaps the violence of contrast did not exist in his dim world, or any variable context between comfort and discomfort, pain or pleasure. At what point could the malice of all physical destinies take toll of that toughened and obdurate mass of bone and muscle, which disdained even a diversity in heat or cold, accepted incredible toil and bloody violence as the normal proportions of a day's work, and as the record of a night's diversion, a clouded memory of rum and women?

Yet it was clear that to Black Bill, also, this present episode of toil carried the spark of some prospective computation in debauch, for at the end of the first day's march he approached the mate, and slapping his harness of gold, said hoarsely:

"Mine?"

"Yours," said the mate, with a sour look at Scoby Green. Black Bill rolled his eyes, and there issued from him a strange internal rumbling, dimly related to laughter, which in no way disturbed the ferocity of his glare. For that occasion, no more was said, whatever profundities of emotion stirred otherwise behind his tangled mane and beard. But that a proper sense of obligation lay somewhere in their muddle he made apparent, a day later, by secretly bestowing on the mate certain ferocious nods and winks.

"You're a true friend," he said, and again rumbled hoarsely.

On the seventh day, toiling slowly through an evil land of

red sandstone, cactus, and the glare of superheated earth, they climbed the last ridge of outcropping rock, and saw, far in the distance, a ragged patch of green, through which showed white walls and dun-coloured roofs. And all three remained gaping; pilgrims at last within reach of a holy shrine.

"Was I right, then?" croaked Scoby Green, envenomed by the knowledge of incredible injustices.

The mate said nothing, but slowly sucked his blackened lips. Assurance returned to his hate-ridden eyes, now that all just exchanges were about to reward the blood and toil of heroes.

"Bill," said he at length. "Make for that patch of scrub yonder. We'll rest there a bit; and make the town by nightfall."

Black Bill moved as bidden, the other two lagging a little behind. Safety in sight of that broad, impassive back, loaded with a king's ransom in debauch, released all unendurable suppressions in Scoby Green's soul.

"Look at him," he said, "carrying' a fortin' he ain't got a dog's fancy to spend properly! What'll he do with it, you think? Have it took from him by the first bitch that gets her hooks on it, an' a knife in the back for him, like as not, an' be damned to him! Call yourself a thinkin' man, and see what you done now, when it's too late."

The mate accepted these aspersions on his foresight with a peculiar grin, as if they, and the spectacle of Black Bill trudging stolidly ahead, ministered subtly to the vanity of his superior cunning.

"You got a head fit for a fancy fiddler to a Dutch galleot, Scoby Green," said he at length. "If I tell you I had a fancy for Black Bill, that fancy goes. If I say I had a reason for him, well, I had a reason for you, too. As for *him*, he's lumped that gold far enough, and we'll bury it in the scrub yonder and come back for it later. What we got'll carry us on a bit, I should say."

Scoby Green gaped vacantly.

"Yer mean to say you'll *take* it from him?" he asked.

The mate, glancing at him sideways, produced a pistol, and began to withdraw the charge, already soaked with bog water. This he carefully replaced, polished the flint and lock on his coat sleeve, and poured a charge in the pan, followed in each action by the bemused attention of Scoby Green.

"Yer mean to say . . ." he repeated.

"You follow what I mean to do," said the mate roughly, "and take your orders accordin'. Prime that pistol o' yours."

With a tremor of haste now in his movements, and an intensity of strange calculation in his eye, Scoby reloaded his weapon, under the mate's resentful frown.

"Understand me, Scoby Green," he said, when all was ready. "You get your share, which is more than you're worth, and pays you off for good. As for me, I fit out for gentleman henceforth, and I don't want no gallows' signal like Black Bill flyin' at the gaff, and so I lay him out the moment we reach that scrub. If I miss, which I ain't likely to, plug yours into him quick."

Scoby nodded, his little eyes now afire with zeal and intelligence, and the pair closed in on Black Bill, the man who had fulfilled his appointed service.

Within a few yards of the broad, sun-blackened shoulders, criss-crossed with their bandoliers of treasure, the mate cast a swift glance of admonition at Scoby, and turning, located steadily a suitable spot between the shoulder blades . . . Then he raised his weapon quickly, like a man well practiced in its use, and fired, and Black Bill, with a startled grunt, pitched forward on his face.

Almost in the passage of that action, Scoby Green fired also. But his aim, at point blank range, sent a bullet through the mate's heart.

With a deadly look, that never reached its object in hatred, the mate hung for a moment, vainly clutching for balance and collapsed at Scoby's feet.

Scoby Green licked his dry lips; his whole face twitched into an ecstasy of relief.

"You was a clever feller, wasn't you," he jeered. "You done for him, and then you was going to do for me. Am I right? I am right. Do I know you? I do know you. Now it's me that gets the lot—me—"

He turned, with dropped jaw, for Black Bill was on his knees, staring bemusedly about him. This portent, for the moment, confounded Scoby's pre-arrangements with destiny, and he could only stare as the great figure scrambled upright, muttering and fumbling at its back. No sign of wound was there, for the bullet had flattened on a package of gold, and only its impact had thrown Black Bill down.

"What hit me?" he growled, and came closer. Scoby Green, with the pistol in his hand, and the mate's body at his feet, did not, for the moment, complete any relation of cause and effect in Black Bill's mind. His puzzled glare wandered impartially over both, and it was not till, with much rolling of the eyes, he bent down to examine a shattered hole in the mate's back, that light was given him, and he turned on Scoby Green with a bellow of rage. Too late, Scoby realised that understanding was beyond the blazing frenzy of Black Bill's eye, and he leaped back with a scream of protest, as those enormous hands reached for him.

"Stand off, you fool," he yelled. "It was him tried to kill you. He was goin' to do for us both. Listen to me."

He dodged aside, missing once the lunge of Black Bill's fury. Maddened by terror, he twisted under it a second time. But cumbered with the weight of gold, he ran like a hobbled cow, and a thudding plunge brought both to the earth.

"Don't do it!" screamed Scoby. "You bloody fool, I saved your life—I—I—"

But no sounds could touch the mad automatism of bone and muscle that gripped the meagre alleyway of life in Scoby Green, and choked for ever all its exits to penury or debauch. Just so long does it take to crack the neck of a rat, and Black Bill, appeased of his frenzy, rose, scratching his head. There were causes in this puzzling world, it seemed, for these uproars that

clouded all actions in a red mist of anger, and rolling his eyes blankly, he let them rest again on the mate's body.

For a period he went on glaring at it, striving to recall sentiments urged upon the occasion by some dim sense of propriety. But these spiritual searchings evaded him, and attracted by the mate's gold-laced jacket, he stripped the body, and adorned himself in this finery, which split under the pressure of his enormous muscles.

This done, he again bent his glare of concentrated vacuity on the dead man, and was delivered of speech.

"He was a true friend, an' he gimme all this gold, so help me God. Amen."

Immensely relieved at this devotional exercise to the Good God of Scoundrels, who juggles the destinies of his chosen between rum, doxies, the hangman, or a friendly knife thrust in the ribs, Black Bill shouldered the extra bandoliers of gold, and with this giant's portion in debauch, lurched on his way, already master of all the trulls and taverns of Los Palamas.

THREE

by KAREL CAPEK

THE sun, which since early morning had been scorching the yellow walls of the farmyards opposite, slowly advanced in grim silence. The walls opposite were already in shadow, and it seemed really as if this made it a little cooler. Now a narrow streak of sunlight lodged on the window-frame, presently it would broaden, and when it fell across the room her husband would wake up, yawn noisily and come in to her, just as he did every Sunday. Marie shrugged her shoulders in dreary disgust and dropped her sewing into her lap.

She stared vacantly out of the window. The chestnut in the court had flowered not long before, but now the blossom had a look as if corroded. Why was it that even the tree filled her with disgust, when it at least was not to blame? A restless, ever increasing, grievous heaviness descended on Marie's heart. If she had wished to talk about herself she might have said that perhaps it was memories; but she never talked about herself, not even to her husband, not even to the other one. However, it was not even memories. It was only as if all the past had rolled into a heavy ball of thread; she had only to pick up the end and one event after another, those which she would gladly recall to life for her own pleasure, and those which she wanted to forget for ever, began to unroll. Marie was thinking of nothing, she did not want to think of anything, but she was conscious of everything about which she might be thinking now. It was all there, and so close that she was afraid to think lest she should touch it.

The little streak of sunshine had jumped across the window-frame.

Above all there was the helpless consciousness that everyone knew about it—everyone knew all about her conjugal infidelity. Oh, at first she had borne it defiantly when so many people made it quite clear to her that they knew. . . . Some of them did it brutally, others with offensive familiarity, others wishing to chastise, and still others—why, there was not one who did not feel she had the right to say something nasty to her. One neighbour muttered audibly something about light women whenever she met her; another shook her head and declared that young people must have their fling, what was the use of being virtuous; another kept making meaning allusions to her husband; another spat; another did not acknowledge her greeting; another overflowed with shrill sympathy and then proceeded to borrow all manner of things. Oh God, must she bear all this?

Yes, at first Marie had forced herself to be defiant, but it is hard to defy one's own evil conscience. And then she shed tears of rage and indignation, but without relief. She could not even complain to her lover, she had never anything to say to him herself; she was kept a speechless captive by the silent, heavy and masterful love of a clumsy and passionate man. Finally she took to pretending that she did not understand the allusions, that they did not refer to her; one gets accustomed to anything, though this "anything" does not thereby become purified, changed or undone.

The ray of sunshine glided down the cords of the blinds.

And then there was her husband. At first perhaps he had not believed what people said about his wife; then he was seized by harrowing despair, and without saying a word to her he took to drink. He became a dreadful drinker, he who had been so temperate a man, and went down in a pitiable way; at last in the office they threatened to retire him, so he changed abruptly, gave up drinking, and began again in his old way, becoming even more economical and stay-at-home than before. For a long time he said nothing to Marie, but finally he had to discuss expenses, laundry, food. . . . He became particular about his food and grew miserly, after he "reformed"; he exacted much consideration and contrived to be content with that. Once he found Baudys, Marie's lover, at his house; he banged the door and without looking at anybody went into the other room; but as soon as the visitor had gone he allowed himself to be called to supper; he did not speak at first, but after the meal he began to talk about something or other with painful pauses, like a man who knows that he ought to be silent. Then, when Marie preferred to go to Baudys' home, he made a fuss several times because she had been out *too long*. Yes, he had had to wait for his supper. People said he was a good-natured soul. Marie hated him, partly because she was wronging him and partly because he took no trouble over himself any more.

The sunshine glided along the wall. Marie followed it like the fateful hand of a clock. She could still hear her husband

snoring regularly ; but after a little while the sofa in the other room would creak, her husband would yawn, get up with an effort, scratching the back of his neck, and with waistcoat unbuttoned and in his stockinged feet, come over to her as he did every Sunday. Then he would wander round the room, finger the furniture, examine damaged places which had been there for years, mutter about expenses, and then carefully and in an indirect way begin his strange weekly discourse. Marie shuddered. He had started the subject that way for a long time now. Hundreds of times he talked of how much a wife cost her husband, and what an expensive business marriage was. Bachelors get the best of it, he began one day, when they run after a married woman. Another man provides for her, another man clothes her ; all that costs them nothing. A bunch of violets, perhaps, he observed, looking fixedly at Marie. They get it cheap, he repeated, dwelling on the subject, as if he had made a discovery. For a whole month he had lived on that theme, and Marie fancied he was jealous.

One day she was sewing trimming on a dress. He came up after a good sleep and asked how much the lace cost, and what was the price of one thing and another. However, he never worried her much about such things ; perhaps he understood her need to be pretty ; all the same he talked about it and grumbled at the cost. Nowadays, he had begun, one man alone has not enough to dress a wife ; no, as things are to-day, one man alone has not a big enough income. Some men, of course, get things cheap, they get a wife for nothing as she is not theirs. . . . Marie began to understand, and it seemed to her that her heart grew cold, but she was silent as if it were nothing to do with her. Her husband looked at her with a fixed and heavy stare and burst out "How about Baudys !" This was the first time that he had uttered the name.

"What about Baudys ?" Marie was alarmed now.

"Nothing," he said evasively, and after a time : "What—er—er income does he get ?"

That was how it began, Marie remembered. And from that time it was the same every Sunday. Why was he sleeping so long to-day ? He would come and scratch his back, "Have you spoken to Baudys ? And how often ? And what salary does he get ?" Then he would begin about himself. No money and needing a new hat—his was really a disgrace ; but what could one do when housekeeping swallowed up everything ? He went on talking by himself. Disgust made a lump rise in Marie's throat which she wanted to get rid of. Her husband shook his head and ended with strange gloominess : "Of course you don't worry yourself about anything."

Marie looked at the advancing ray of sunlight and dug her finger-nails into her palms. If she could only be spared that memory ! It was one day at her lover's house—after such a Sunday as this. Baudys put her on the sofa, but she resisted him and began to cry ; she felt it was necessary to cry, and for a long, long time she let him beg for an explanation—that her husband was stingy, he wouldn't give her money for clothes or anything. Her lover listened with a frown and as if damped ;

he was so . . . so clumsy, perhaps, that he calculated mentally how much it would cost. At last he said hesitatingly and reluctantly: "I'll see to that, Marie." Marie felt that now she could cry without pretence, but instead she had to let herself be caressed; oh, more than she had, more than she had till then.

He was waiting for her next time with a gift; it was some dress material which Marie did not like; she went home feeling crushed with shame. Up to that time her relations with her lover had been those of a wife with her husband; her caresses were grave and devoted; now she closed her eyes on herself so as not to shudder. While she was cutting out the material her husband had come in. "Did Baudys give you that?" he asked eagerly.

Marie sighed and began to sew with long stitches. She was sewing a silk blouse; even the stuff for that had been bought by her lover. It was strange how it pleased him to load her with costly, extravagant and tempting presents. Sometimes she reflected happily how fond he was of her; sometimes, however, she thought otherwise and felt terribly uneasy; her restrained, passive love was gone; these gifts exhaled something feverish and luxurious, and Marie forced herself into a state of unnatural and frivolous high spirits which did not itself ripen in her tranquil and healthy body. This was a fiery change which the lover received like a thirsty drunkard but Marie as something unwelcome and repulsive. It seemed to her inexpressibly sinful, because it was against her own nature; but she could not defend herself and swallowed it all, striving desperately and vainly not to think about it. A week ago he had tried to make her drink wine; he himself was tipsy. She refused to drink, but when later he breathed on her with his drunken, burning, passionate breath, she could have screamed with horror.

The streak of sunlight gently settled on her mother's photograph. It was the round, clear, happy face of a countrywoman who had borne children, and with blessings in her heart rendered back to life all it had given her. Marie's hands dropped into her lap; her husband's breathing grew quiet; the heat was scorching and the silence very oppressive. A grunt from her husband in the next room, the sofa creaked, the floor creaked under unsteady steps. Marie began to sew rapidly. Her husband opened the door, yawned aloud, and all unbuttoned, still stupid from his sleep, perspiring, came up to her, scratching his neck. Marie did not even raise her eyes, but went on sewing more rapidly still.

Her husband wandered round the room in his stockinged feet, stood over her unsteadily, yawned, and asked:

"What's that you're sewing?"

Marie did not reply, she merely spread out her work for him to see.

"You had this from Baudys?" he asked without interest. She stuck the needle in her mouth and did not reply. Her husband sighed and fingered the silk with the air of a connoisseur, as though he understood it. "You had this from Baudys," he answered his own question.

"Ages ago," said Marie, from the corner of her mouth.

"Ah-h," yawned her husband, and began to walk about the room.

"You might at least put your shoes on," observed Marie after a time.

Her husband said nothing and continued to walk about. "Oh yes," he began, "always rags. What's the use of such nonsense. Money's nothing to you. That's what I say, Marie, money's nothing to you."

"At any rate you don't pay for it," Marie's voice was hard. She knew that the conversation was beginning as it had so many Sundays.

"I don't pay for it," repeated her husband. "Of course I don't pay for it. Where should I find the money for it? I—have to pay for other things. I have to pay insurance premiums. . . . We haven't anything to spare for unnecessary things. You don't think of what is being paid out. A hundred and fifty for rent. And insurance. It's all one to you. Have you spoken to Baudys?"

"Yes."

"Of course. Oh, my Lord," yawned her husband, and looked at Marie's work. "You don't think of the money, Marie. How much would that cost, that kind of material, do you know?"

"No."

"How often have you spoken to him this week?"

"Twice."

"Twice," he repeated thoughtfully. "It's waste of money. And you've such a lot of frocks already. Now listen, Marie."

The young woman bent her head; now it was coming.

"For two years we haven't saved anything. It's like that, Marie. Suppose something happened, illness or anything . . . And you think of nothing but having pretty frocks."

Marie remained obstinately silent.

"We ought to put something by; and then coal for the winter. I should be glad if I—for old age—if you had. . . . At least you might think of your own old age."

There was a torturing silence; Marie pulled her needle through the stuff hardly knowing how. Her husband gazed out of the window over her blond head and tried to say something; his wretched unshaven chin, stained from a meal, was trembling.

"Stop!" cried Marie.

His chin fell; he gave a helpless gulp and said: "You know, I could do with some clothes myself; but I know that we haven't the money to spend on them. That's how it is, Marie."

He sat down, huddled up, and stared at the floor.

Marie stuck her needle into the silk. Yes, a week ago he had talked like that; she herself could have wept over his shabby clothes. She turned them over every day, was familiar with each frayed thread; she was ashamed when he went to the office in them.

The day before she had been at her lover's house ; she went there with a plan prepared, but it did not turn out as she wanted. She sat on his knee (thinking this necessary in view of the circumstances) and worked herself up into petulant gaiety ; he was at once on the alert and asked what she wanted. She laughed and asked him not to buy her any more presents ; she would rather buy them herself if only she had something to buy them with. He looked at her, and his hands fell to his sides. "Get up," he said, rose and walked up and down the room ; then he counted out two hundred crowns and put them beside her handbag. Ah, she had purposely left her handbag on the table ; she had thought it all out beforehand ; why did he not understand, why did he leave it to her, when she said good-bye, to gather up the notes and cram them hastily and clumsily into her handbag ? Why, at least, did he not turn away while she did so, why did he watch it all with a fixed, scrutinising stare ? Marie looked at the point of her needle with dry wide eyes ; unconsciously she tore the silk, making a crooked hole in it with absent-minded thoroughness.

"That is just it, Marie," observed her husband with difficulty. "We haven't enough money."

"My handbag," said Marie irritably.

"What do you want ?"

"Take . . . my handbag."

He opened the handbag ; found the crumpled bunch of notes just as she had stuffed them in the day before. "Is this yours ?" he gasped.

"Ours," said Marie.

Her husband stared dumbfounded at his wife's bent neck ; he did not know what to say. "Am I to put it by ?" he asked softly.

"If you like."

He shuffled about in his stockinged feet, trying to find a word of offence or tenderness ; finally without a word he went into the next room with the money. He was there a long time ; when he returned he found Marie still with bent head tearing the silk with her needle.

"Marie," he said softly, "wouldn't you like to come for a walk with me ?"

Marie shook her head.

Her husband lingered helplessly, it was impossible to talk about it *now*. . . . "Look here, Marie," he broke out at last with an air of relief, "suppose I go to a café now ? It's years now since I——"

"Go," whispered Marie.

He dressed, not knowing what to talk about ; but Marie did not stir, bent over the many-coloured silk, pretty, buxom, speechless. . . .

He dressed hurriedly as though he would take to flight ; at the door he hesitated again, stopped, and said vaguely : "You know, Marie, if you like to go out—well—you can. I may be out to supper."

Marie laid her head on the torn silk. That day she was not granted the gift of tears.

CONFESSION OF A LARRIKIN

by SERGE ESSENIN

All the world can't be poets.
Yes, I repeat
It's not the fate of every man to fall
Like an apple at the other's feet.

This is the last confession of a larrikin.
Listen then !
Out I walk in the street among the men,
Hurried on a purpose, with untidy hair—
While from my shoulders at each stamp
My head flares upwards like a petrol-lamp.

I like to light up in the night
The spoiled autumns of your souls—I like
To feel the stony insults on me
As a storm's hail strike !
I hold between my hands then
This bent bladder rough with hair
And pleasantly my fingers dream
Of a pool, and the moss there,
And the wind made ragged by the alders . . .
And I recall that somewhere now or other
Upon the earth I have a father and mother
Who do not give a damn for all my poems
But love me like the soil where they were born,
Like their own bodies or the little raindrops
Softening the young spring-corn.
(They'd lash you with their whips,
All you that hurt me with your scorn !)

But O the poor old country bumpkins . . .
You are indeed a very ugly lot . . .
Always afraid of God or of the rot—
What would you have to say
If you could know your son is the best poet
In all Russia to-day ?

The hoar frost struck your loving hearts when he
Went paddling in chill puddles with bare toes . . .
And now, in polished leather and top-hat,
Along the street he goes ;
But underneath the village blackguard is there,
Waiting to leap up rowdily if he dare—
He lifts his hat if he should pass a cow
In butchers' shops, and if
He chances on a coach left in the square
And of some dung can get a good deep sniff,
He is ready to hold up high each horse's tail,
Like a bridal train. . .

O I love the earth, enormously !
I love it, I say again.

Though there is sadness in a mildewed willow
I love the ugly jaws of pigs that wallow,
And the wide cranking of the toad that fills
The endless night when silence richly falls.
I am sick with childhood memories, I dream
Of the wet dew of April evenings.
Look how the maple, shivering and drawn,
Crouches before the brazier of dawn—
And O, how many crows' nests have I stolen,
Climbing those very boughs !
I wonder are the leaves still green above
And the trunk still as strong . . .
And you, the dog I used to love,
You are so old that you are blind,
You have forgotten everything,
You grumbling cur no longer able
To tell the parlour from the stable !
How dear it is to bring back to my mind
The many pranks that we two played.
Do you remember how we stole that bread
And ate it, bite by bite, in turn . . . we two ?
Well, I suppose you're dead—
But I, I'm still the same,
And still my eyes are blossoming like corn-flowers.
I want to say some word to please you all
As here I spread the gilt mat of my verse . . .
O well, good night I call—
Good night to all of you !

Now in the meadows of the evening
The scythe has ceased to swish ;
And just now I was taken with a wish
To piss out of my window over the moon.
The light has grown so blue,
It is the kind of blue in which to die
Would be to fade without a single sigh—
And, after all, what does it matter though
I try to assume a cynical cleverness,
Hooking a lantern at my beaming arse ?

Poor spavined Pegasus,
I only ask one little amble more !
For I am come to sing, in exact metre,
The glories of the rats.

Like August is my head,
Running with wine and with my foaming hair—
I want to be a sun-bleached canvas spread
Towards the unknown shore
That calls to us.

[Trs. Jack Lindsay]

PRELUDE

by ELZA DE LOCRE

MOLLY sauntered along Regent Street. Her walk was bold but uncertain. Now and again her courage failed her and she would walk towards a shop window on the pretence of inspecting the articles there; then summoning up courage once more she would venture forth, keeping her eye straight ahead for fear that anyone might guess her intentions. She felt everyone was staring at her and knew what she was thinking. Her courage failed once again, she quickened her pace and almost ran across the road to the Underground.

"South Kensington," she said, and told herself that it was no use, she couldn't do it. If only there were not so many people about to watch her she might be able to manage it. She got into the train and sat down; then taking a book from under her arm opened it and pretended to read. She always carried a book with her, she felt it gave her some moral support. Now and again she would lift her eyes and glance hurriedly round at the people standing up beside her in the train, her eyes always searching the men's faces, at the same time giving them a piercing look as though she dared them to look at her. An old man turned on her a libidinous glance. She dropped her eyes with a feeling of nausea.

At South Kensington station she left the train to go home to a small room in a dirty little house off some side street, which she had secured with her last ten shillings. The landlady, a squat and wrinkled old woman with a very hard face, had asked for the rent in advance, and Molly had been relying on that ten shillings for food until she could find work again.

That was five days ago. She had managed to obtain one meal since then, from an old friend she had met by accident. She had wanted to tell him of her position as she knew he would help her, but her courage had again failed her. She felt very hungry. She had had nothing but water now for two days, and the day after to-morrow her rent was due again.

She decided there was only one thing left to do—to die. She had even gone so far as trying to secure some poison from the chemist. The man was suspicious, and would not give it to her. He mumbled something about a doctor's certificate. It is all so futile, she thought, struggling on like this; even if she did manage to find some work within the next day or so, what was the use? She felt she couldn't go on working, just for something to eat, to keep herself alive. She must have something to live for, only mad people could go on like this. Love alone can make life worth living, she repeated mechanically, and then wondered why she believed that. Yet that conviction kept her alive. Why? She had never known love, never seen it. Where was it? Not in this man, not in that man. Where then? And yet this fantasy had kept her alive. Perhaps she was mad. People had often told her so. She instinctively put her hand up to her forehead, as though she would find there the explanation she had long sought. Then she became

conscious again that she was walking in the street and people were looking at her . . . more, she grew aware that a man was following her on the opposite side of the road. She quickened her pace. He thinks I'm a woman of the streets, thought Molly, and that hurt her. She hoped he would speak to her and wondered what she would say. Her heart thumped in her head, making her feel sick.

"Good evening." The voice sounded faint, as though it came from a distance. For a second she decided to take no notice, then she turned her head and faced him. "Good evening."

The young man looked nervously round and then turned to her again. "Are you going home?" he asked. Molly felt he was trying to make a bargain with her. "Yes," she said.

"Where do you live?" the man asked.

"Why?" replied Molly with a sad smile. She hoped this man would pity her and like her. She walked on silently until they came to her door. The young man seemed to hesitate.

"May I come in?" he said. Molly wavered. She liked the man, he had such a charming face, he must be very nice.

"I'd like you to come in," she said, "but my room is not very pleasant."

"That doesn't matter," answered the young man eagerly, "I want to be with you."

Molly opened the door very quietly, signing to the man to be quiet. They reached her room without anyone hearing them, and Molly locked the door, saying she feared the landlady might walk in if she did not lock it.

"What were you doing out this time of night?" he asked, as though he were somewhat doubtful of the situation. Molly thought: ah, he is nice, he is intelligent and can see I am not like other women; and she began to feel a little less frightened. The young man took hold of her hands and drew her down to the divan. Then he kissed her, looking into her eyes as if he were afraid of her. Molly tried to be brave, she wanted to explain why she had been out that time of night, but somehow she couldn't. She would tell him later, she thought, when she knew him a little better.

Morning came looking very dismal, and Molly quietly sat up in bed and studied the man lying beside her. She had not slept all night, and was feeling very tired. She remembered this was the third day she had had nothing to eat now, and lay down and waited for him to wake.

She lay there a long time trying to summon up enough courage to ask him for a small loan, but she felt he would look at her coldly and despise her. She knew then that she couldn't ask him, and she hoped he would not leave her anything. That would hurt her most of all. She wanted to see him again, she liked him. Now she would be thrown out for sure, anyway.

The young man woke, mumbled something about the weather then jumped out of bed and dressed himself. Molly lay in bed watching him, waiting for him to say something to her. She felt he would like her, she had not asked him for anything. He had finished dressing and was looking at his watch.

"What do you do with yourself all day?" he asked.

Molly did not answer. Then she summoned all her courage and said: "As a matter of fact I am looking for work. I'm broke." She went on laughing, trying to make a joke of it for fear of him misunderstanding.

The young man did not answer, but continued putting the finishing touches to his clothes. Molly felt he was feeling awkward and was in a hurry to get away, not knowing how to take her. She wanted to say: "You will come and see me again, won't you?" but the words did not come.

"By the way," he said, "if you would care to have lunch with me, I'll call for you at one o'clock."

Molly said quietly, "Thank you," and wished him good-bye. He waved his hand to her as he passed out of the door. Molly gaily waved back at him; she knew he would not return.

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SIR HORACE WISEACRE'S WAGGERY

by ROBERT NICHOLS

LET the world wag,
I didn't begin it,
Why feel compunction
Toward ought in it?

Let the world wag,
Let wowsers wowse,—
I've Oil, a new *chef*,
A damnfine house.

Let the world wag.
It wags. What of it?—
I'm no Mister Wells
Or other prophet.

The Deuce take Science
(It's His by right)
Religion, metaphysics,
Arts, black and white.

Let the world wag
(It must I suppose)—
I dine, "Sir Horace,"
Beneath the rose.

I forego the crown,
Though merely myrtle,
Dictators dictate,
I choose turtle.

The League of Nations
Will have to wait.

Next to dinner I
Like my hate.

But dinner comes first!
And I will own
I can let hate go
If not alone.

Let lovers love
And liars lie,—
A pox on all truth
And love, say I.

Mine a baby blonde
With no pretence
To expecting virtue
Or talking sense.

Turn she baggage
Or should mirth flag,—
I can buy others.
Let the world wag.

Let the world wag.
It wags. What of it?
To wowser the loss
To me the profit.

Let the world wag.
Wagging won't end it,
And confound you, sir,
I've no wish to mend it!

DUNG OF PEGASUS

by PETER MEADOWS—PART II.

STILL ADOLESCENT : CHAPTER THE FOURTH

I CAME springily down the steps of the public library. I would write a dialogue in Plato's manner, marvellously continuing the symposium and giving Socrates' analysis of tragedy and comedy as mutually conditioned, which the sleeper missed. I would write a play on some bloody and lovely catastrophe of love. It would clamour more nobly with feverish disdain and anger and alarms of ecstasy than *Antony and Cleopatra*, where the two lovers stand so very lonely, yet so inextricably condemned to the clattering world, restlessly turning to each other. I would pour out images of utter and blasphemous daring, some offering laughter that would face all the swarming terrors of earth in a supreme gesture of defiance. I wanted more than God to spit on, more than Death to shrug aside. My thoughts fell head-over-heels down my chasmic mind cloven by some huge uncomprehended image of reckless and furious courage. I seemed to be walking a foot or two higher than my body: hunched up over myself, blown up like a flame out of the top of my head, tufted with my spirit like a plume, on stilts of rapture, looking down on a queerly rigid body, sitting on my own shoulders, an Old Man of the Sea flogging on a dull corpse, a leaden beast of burden.

I turned the corner and saw the girl with yellow hair ahead of me. What should I do? If I walked slowly, perhaps we would get to the boarding-house before I came up to her. I pretended to read my notes, taking short paces, but with all my efforts I soon found myself almost at her heels. She stopped, and I was forced to pass her. Blushing, I did so. I hurried on with a wild pulse till I reached the safety of the house. There, from the drawing-room window, I watched her come up. Slowly she sauntered by, her insolent heavy eyes with their glassy pallor of blue, her heavy hips. Her image hung heavily in the arms of thought, the imagined weight of her body scalded me. She did not turn to look at the house. How often had I watched her from that window. . . .

I sat reading over the notes I had made from Donne's correspondence. Nancy came in. She seated herself on the arm of the chair, leaning against me. I choked, a death in honey. My breath ceased; a warm sweetness crawled fearfully all over me.

"What's this?" she asked. "Something you've been writing?"

"O no, just some literary notes," I said. I longed to look up into her bending face, I seemed imbedded in thousands of hot fleshy flowers, if I looked up our cheeks would almost touch, perhaps they would touch. Her mother entered the room.

Upstairs, I sat at my table. Love. I tried to conjure up a picture of Nancy naked, but nothing except a pale blur waved

up through my trembling mind. I tried to conjure up the fancy of embracing her, rationalising by means of the facts I knew the cloudy and bursting mystery of its emotional conception. Was there no end to this hell? I would never reach manhood. I would be paralytic, lunatic, gibbering, afflicted with Saint Vitus's Dance, blind with ghastly milky eyes, for ever open, palsied, impotent, ruptured, bed-ridden, consumptive, carbuncled, dying, dying anæmically. It couldn't be helped. I went into the bathroom.

I would never get a woman anyway.

I washed my face and hands savagely. I would not think of it. I must not think of it. Put it out of my mind. Think of other things. Go out and row. Go for a walk. I was dying already. I must not think of it.

I took up the notes for the Life of Ben Jonson I had begun, and went on copying out the dates of the Masques. Then I took up the unfinished sonnet to Marlowe:

O fiery spirit garbed and shod with flame,
Winging above the morning, from afar
Thou camest—from what fierce tempestuous star
Was it that thou with songs of fire here came?

That wouldn't do. I had *camest* and then *came*, and the second was needed for the rhyme. Would I give up *thou* altogether? No, that seemed to spoil it. I would have to rewrite the whole sonnet. I sat, started again:

O flaming spirit garbed and shod with fire . . .

THE DEFEAT OF ADOLESCENCE: CHAPTER THE FIFTH

I CAME out of the tent in which I had been erecting a bed by threading saplings through a sack and then balancing the consequent stretcher over two inverted V's held upright by stakes driven into the ground; and walked across to the camp fire, where the newcomers were grouped warming their flat hands. There was a score of men and women. I saw a young girl.

The pale gums stretched up into misty skies, clouds of sandstone. They were lost to view before they passed through the cracked clouds. Anyhow, our small world of rosy light was left far beneath. Tent flies, mostly too high owing to the supports having been chopped down by generous enthusiasts, by myself and a youth who was writing a pamphlet on Self-expression in Industry, scooped out warm empty masses among the scraggy leaves, like mirages of desert pools. A swollen burst bole hung over the fire. All the new arrivals stood there with the helplessness of those who come on savage unknown places after dark.

She was looking at me. But it seemed that no one else in the world had eyes, only I had them. No one else could see anything, they were all dazed and blind, shut in numb senses. This girl was a tall phantom of burning dust, a blind mummy of fire; she could not see me. But I could see her. I looked at her for a long time, until she laughed.

Later we were introduced, and I managed to keep near her side. She turned and gazed straight into my face with clear welcoming eyes. She said nothing. I could only talk when alone.

"Will you be here all the two weeks?" I asked at length.

"Yes, I will be here all the two weeks," she replied.

"It's rather cold to-night, isn't it?"

"Yes, I thought it was rather cold."

You felt that she re-used your words not out of mockery but as a carefully premeditated tribute to their peculiarly just summing up of the situation. She did not answer at once. She considered; then she presented you with your own words as though she added a profound contribution of thought to yours, as though she were speaking a foreign tongue or making a mathematical calculation. It gave her an air of unreality, of dollish condescension. It was as though a picture suddenly awoke with bell-like echoes of your thought, startling your meditation with a dialogue of mysterious inanities.

Another girl came up. "Molly, come and help us with the tea things." Molly turned to me her large mute eyes as if making up her mind whether it was worth while trying to explain to me, whether I would be able to understand her if she were so foolish as to attempt an explanation. Evidently she decided there was a remote chance of my comprehension. Her lips formed the words in trial, and then she determined on the formula they should take.

"Excuse me," she said, "I have to go and help with the tea things."

Once or twice I found her eyes upon me, but I could not tell if she was watching me or was lost in some waxen Nirvana, a land where words did not exist, only the sawdust of unconscious sensation.

I lay in my sack bed awake for a long time after the other two in my tent were, omitting the scandalous complexity of possible dream lives, sterterous corpses out of whose lungs sleep, as methodically as a life-saver kneading life into a half-drowned man, was discharging a regular wastage of breath. There was a silence breaking like slow waves in the trees: an underswell of silence that caught the mind in a tow of danger, silence beating in tides of sap, in crumbling earth, the fist of air that slowly crushes the withering leaf, the tiny crackle of withdrawing life, the filtering stain of colour.

I tried to evoke Molly, but my mind kept running back to the favourite golliwog of my childhood, whose enigmatic eyes had been replaced and did not match. Replaced with black boot buttons which wobbled, as though the eyes were horribly loose, kept in their sockets by a small nerve of metal.

When I awoke the subtle gnawing life of quiet was gone behind the solid brass wall of locust-shrilling. A swerving billow of sound that never broke, disturbed by the whistles of birds as if a composer were vainly endeavouring to introduce themes into a chaos of polyphonic semitones which had got beyond control in his head. If you listened long enough you

were yourself the maddened musician trying to convert this vast wind of discord with a thematic chirp.

I hurried down for a swim in the pool below the fall. I lounged nude on the big wet rock, looking out for leeches and pulling up pleated water weeds. The morning sky consumed the dazzled leaf edges above me, the leaves rubbed away against the edges of the light, and the sky was lower than the tree-tops still. Lianas like the cords of some maniacal hussar criss-crossed the packed bosom of the woods. Palms waved their topknots as though they were a Zulus' barber shop, plumed coiffures fixed on lofty stands. The wind coloured the trees with the sky. Big ferns with rolled shoots like those that boys blow in each other's faces or shavings left from the plane of some expert forest carpenter, some satyr-craftsman, mixed with small fern tracteries like hair nets come off ravished servant girls in the struggle to preserve their virtue. Plump spiders mended their nets taut with sunlight. Water beetles skidded with busy aimlessness over the pool, their legs dinting but not breaking the smooth surface of the water. Birds screeked and squealed around, sentimental fruit pigeons with insinuating coo, and sweet-voiced gerygones fussing about their tiny nests, one of which I made out hanging securely in its leaves, and at times a logrunner peeped sagely from behind cover.

Some small tadpole-like creatures were nibbling my toes. I felt horror. Was there a spider swinging on me from the back? How many water-snakes darted through this brown pool? All the wood around was rotting. Full of ugly life. I longed for company. I would have to get into that horrible water again to reach my clothes and dry ground. I had to.

The others were beginning to come down as I removed the leech from my left ankle and towelled myself. I could not understand the panic of that loathsome dash through wriggling water. "Splendid in the pool," I said with British sincerity.

I had promised to bring up some things from the station below, and I had to leave her. She smiled at me as I went. All the way there and back I thought of others interrupting that pellucid smile, wiping her nose for her, putting on her stockings for her, pouring out her tea for her, showing her the way to the improvised lavatory. How I yearned to do all these things, how chivalrously.

I got back as they were discussing who should go for the milk. She and two others volunteered, there were two buckets to be carried. "I'll show you the way," I said, and she smiled to encourage me, to show that she quite grasped my meaning: a smile with that slight remaining tinge of puzzled deliberation she brought to the simplest problem, as though some dark and perilous meaning lay behind it, troubling the opaque integrity of her soul.

We went down over the creek blurbling along over worn rocks; past the ruined sawmill, all its tumbled wood furry green with bright delicate moss distributed as evenly as from a brush, the circular saw still standing up straight between an oblong contraption of beams like a dismantled guillotine. We went up tunnels paved with decaying leaves inches deep and

showery with dew, while I kicked before me, till it broke, a shell of the giant snail, *panda falconeri*, big enough to serve as a beer-mug.

We saw the bottoms of tree trunks as though we were underground. Tall smooth silver gums that glisten in sunlight as luminously as the track of a snail, their bark all gone save near the roots, so that they showed like women stepping out of a fallen chemise. The damp silence goblined our laughter. Lawyer vines with their concealed fish-hooks caught and tore sleeves, while orchids high up on the boles made little holes of colour among the bird nest ferns. Molly and I loitered behind. I took her hand shyly, and that did for conversation. In the bowels of this silence pitched to a harsh low key like the grating roar that is hushed in sea-shells it was difficult enough to talk to anyone.

We obtained the milk and started back over the field wet with flowers, into the raw silence.

"It's extraordinarily ghostly about this time," I remarked.

She leant a little to one side; then she confirmed my words. "Yes, it is. . . ." She was thinking hard for the inevitable phrase. "Ghostly . . . extraordinary. . . ." But she must not be too sweeping, she must be exact. "About this time." She said it diffidently, as if she expected contradiction. However I told her she was right.

The other pair spilt half their pail where the path sloped treacherously downward to the creek. We didn't spill any. I was very proud of this when we returned, and casually gave everyone advice about slippery paths and the local topography. Molly followed me round, smiling agreement. I sat down by her at supper, and passed her food. She was very grateful, but said nothing.

It was next evening before any chance of intimacy arrived. During the day she had gone about her tasks allotted to her with a quiet effectiveness and a reserve that was altogether without self-consciousness. She did not, as we others, let her mind dawdle through a medley of thoughts growing for the most part out of things around. Our thoughts were intruders in a world of facts. Hers were frankly astonished whenever a fact intruded upon their enormous privacy; she evidently considered actuality a monstrous joke, but was not sure enough of the point to permit herself a laugh. She awaited some unintelligible cure. For after all humour might not be intended by this bewildering world, and the *faux pas* would be irretrievable. When spoken to she made an effort to shake this coifing silence out of her hair, and turned half-hopefully, as if at last the reason for life, the point of this rambling and inconsequential jest, was to be revealed. There was a vague disappointment each time the satisfying peroration did not appear.

Several of us went for a walk. Dusk was beginning to grow up out of the bushes; sound became removed as though windows had been closed all round the soul's habitation, making clamour retreat into an indefinable distance. We came out on the mountain-side. The deep scene was already filling in with edgeless night. Lights were turned on deceptively near, and

a train engine made little glowing puffs of light through the gloom as though a man progressed along there slowly, quite near, drawing at his cigar. Silence is always ebbing from, or moving towards, a collapse of noise. Silence is the least still thing in the world. It fidgets.

We walked along contented enough, the others talking about Marxian economics and Love.

"But," said the youth with the half-cast in his eye, who when excited had the habit of boring into his ear with his forefinger as if frenziedly extracting the wax of an idea, "it is the Socially Necessary Time that makes the valuation."

"I think," said Miss Cruicks, who was over forty, lived on nut foods, and had hair the colour of the vast moustaches of old gentlemen who drink quantities of mulligatawny soup, "LOVE should be perfectly free. The teaching of birth control should be made compulsory in the schools."

"Children," said the grave Dutch anarchist who wore a gold signet ring and had weak eyes, "do not need the inculcation of the ethics or methods of contraception as their sexual manifestations do not result in the propagation of the species."

"Yes," said Miss Price, who had a long thin nose polished with dyspepsia and a continual fear that the buttons at the back of her blouse were undone, "children are so innocent."

"But would sponges washed ashore be of less value than those fished up by labour?"

"It was the personal genius of Lenin that prevented the breakdown between the Mir and Marx."

"Can't we get away from all this?" I whispered to Molly.

"Can't we?" she asked doubtfully. Then as though I had forced some terrible responsibility on her, she stopped, staring hard at me, like someone trying to remember a telephone number. I started counting the ticks of the hush, wondering how long we could stand like that. At last she gave the slight pout which showed her thoughts were formulating between her lips; she spoke.

"Let's hide."

The dear infantile inspiration of her words. We had a lantern, but we couldn't light it as we had no matches; so we shadowed the others down tracks of slushy darkness, under tangled skies shaken by voices every now and then to waterdrops. Hand in hand, too shy to let go though our palms were sweaty and our fingers cramped, not caring anyhow, liking the little torments for the immeasurable bliss, crushed laughter pinching us in the stomach, doubling up, strained muscles of the calves, the sticky smooth caked feeling of woollen socks wet and muddy under the toes, holding barbed wire apart to step through, not saying anything, happy.

I could see her face for all the darkness. The deepest night could not quite have put out her face, it burned so with a candour of delight. A pale dark happiness.

They turned to go back, the clear tones of their voices hanging as substantial as flowers in the buoyant air.

"I never could submit to such a degrading exhibition as the

marriage ceremony." Miss Cruicks was very firm, as befitted a Vestal of License.

"Not if you *loved* a man?" timidly suggested Miss Price.

"I cannot recall the exact statistics," broke in the anarchist, wiping his watering eyes, "but I have them in my bag. They relate to the sexual instincts of girls before puberty. They are very interesting."

"But Marx never considered the existence of peasantry."

"I never did any of those things you say, when I was a small girl, and I'm *sure* none of my friends did," exclaimed Miss Prince, as though whatever doubt there might be in her own case there was none about the others.

They passed the spot where we stood peeping from behind a tall bush that lit a thousand bulbs of water; the motion of the lanterns as they walked cabined them in swinging cages of light; then they were gone. Still in an aloof courtesy of laughter we followed. We were fugitives of blowing star and sloping darkness, going lightly in gathered secrecy, in confidence of wonder, into risky heavens.

It was as we went over the ploughed field near the camp that I tripped and pulled her down. She put out her hand to save herself, over my head. She lay across me, making no effort to rise. Her loose dress had slipped a little down her right arm. I lifted and kissed her between arm and breast. So soft.

When she stirred, it was to move away so that her mouth could reach mine. She kissed me. For the first time a woman kissed me. It was a kiss with which she kissed me.

All other caresses till this had been fumbling uncertainties. This was a Kiss, the kingly and indubitable thing. We lay there. I was thinking, throwing ecstasy into the face of time, as a boy skims a rock over water to see how far it will fly. I do not know what she was doing. Then I kissed her again.

We got back finally. She went straight to her tent, without a word. I joined the others, having invented a long circumstantial story to explain our absences. But nobody had noticed that we were missing. I was very disappointed.

The discovery of the Kiss obsessed my flesh. For hours we lay among rubble of rocks and leaves, daring leeches and colds, kissing. I did not want to do anything else but kiss. No speculation or wish moved a pulse further.

She sighed. Her eyes were always closed now; and the smile that had alighted with the flash of a bird upon her face was now always there, but now no longer complete. It was a crushed sunken smile like a form seen through water, dimmed and gone before determined. A fading smile that never retreated beyond the warm lowered eyelashes; that smoothed the calm contours of the cheeks. Kisses drowned her, they waterlogged her with a faint ecstasy.

I was indefatigable in this unexplored country of the Kiss. Molly was an experimental doll of kisses, nothing more. A toy stained with indelible smiles, insignia of my vanquished adolescence, my tangible manhood. There was nothing to say. I had not yet learned the slang of love, the casual exchange

of leisurely lecheries. I could not recite the poems that thudded in my forehead, and in my restless hands, and under my ribs. I had none of the hypocritical frankness with which maturity's cool mind confesses the disorders of the flesh. I had not yet mastered the inane insufficiencies which pass among women for rapture's babble. Molly and I turned, went under water when we turned to love, groping through a vague smudge of embraces, a bursting silence that ripped up the mind while leaving the lungs safe.

Nothing mattered. In the dark I put out my hand and caught hold of a poisonous stinging-tree. It pained me savagely, but I made no sign, did not even mention it afterwards, though next day I went to where we had been lying and had the satisfaction of chopping the bush down. But I found out from a remark of her sister's that she had been stung also and had also said nothing at the time; and we never spoke of it.

We kissed a storm out too. Under a tree whose branches did nothing but consolidate the separate raindrops into large streams, like spouts on roofs, we lay. When it lightened, the face of every leaf glistened broadly, the streams of water were full of twisted coils of silver, there was a glimpse of the tight cotton-threads of the tapestried rain like some great loom. Fences and undulating earth rushed up drably as though the flash, however it might clear the empty spaces of air, could not tear away closely the mist of blackness that clung to them; could not scrape the fungus of night from crannied shapes. Sharp fierce fire flattened on an earth clammy with darkness; and above, all around, like a smoky cavern, hung the resuming gloom.

We lay huddled in the roots, wet through. I could feel the water trickling down under my belt, inside. We were warm where we touched. We kissed.

In what intervals I could not escape, I tried to compose verses; but all words burnt out in my mind. I toiled, tying together into syntax and rhyme the words that snapped in my hands like the dry brushwood I collected for the fire. I was mad to pour this puddled mass of sensation, simmering in the cauldron of my body into some matrix. But I could not. I sat with the others while lines of derivative verse wandered through my mind.

I used to wonder how to kiss and what words should be said,

And whether first I'd kiss your mouth or kiss your golden head.

I wondered how one started and just how to hold you tight . . .

I was so very shy, you know, and anxious to be right.

The pale-eyed anarchist by me had a little girl of five or six on his knee; he was getting her to look in his pocket for pennies. Miss Prince leaned forwards to him from her stool, a thin hand carressing her throat.

"I quite agree with what you say about sex. I think it's frightfully over-rated, but two sympathetic intellects——"

"Nonsense," said Miss Cruicks, shaking her curls which

one expected to jingle. "Sex is an appetite of the brute in man. I hate men. They're all brutes."

The anarchist jogged the child up and down on his knee with a bland joy watering through his round glasses.

"Already a structural degeneration of the feminine pelvis. . ."

Molly was listening politely, graciously. I repeated to myself:

And on another's lips you'll find
The kisses that I left behind.

Nobody took much notice of us. The anarchist went for long walks with the little girl, and everyone said what a nice man he was: you can always tell a man by the way he gets on with children. Miss Prince tried to trail him, and Miss Cruicks trailed her; and the pair had long angry colloquies in the tent they had insisted on sharing alone.

She sighed. How unhandy I was. She stirred inside my kiss. She sighed. What should I do? It was not credible. I tried to wake her with my mouth. We were in a disused tent. A spectral lantern outside threw a dim aqueous glare through the canvas. Rain pitted the crumbling silence. Both of us seemed paler than ivory, than lilies in the dawn. We were hidden in a canvas-flower. I could smell honey, I could smell your sweat. I heard a shout outside. Both of us were closed within ivory and sifting silence. Everything was dead. You were dead too. They would never find us now. Babes in the wood. Birds would heap the dead leaves of silence over our bodies frozen with kisses. The rest of you was whiter than your face; who could have guessed that you would be so white? We were under a drifting lime of silence. We would be eaten alive, like the victims of some murderer; sucked to death inside this great honey-flower. Snapdragons of silence. We would never get out of this silence, this orchid pollened with death. This great flower would smell of your sweat. You sighed. You were only a doll of flesh, a sturdy doll invented by my kisses, a doll with white legs, a doll that sighed. You gasped now. That was a new trick. You were a very clever doll, for I made you myself. But I was a marvellous lover now, I was as good as any other passionate swashbuckler now. Women would quarrel over me, I would make them fight like dogs. I would go to bed with two girls. I would sit in splendid hotels and get drunk with five girls, all listening. I would embrace a great lady in a crinoline in the middle of an immense empty ballroom, on the shining floor. I would make girls cry so that I could lick the tears off their nipples. I would be able to brave all the women I had been frightened of, all my day-dreams: actresses with the make-up still on, cocottes within silk pyjamas too small for them, Polish Countesses who made love fluently in thirteen languages, English Countesses with faces like horses and a cold brutality of manner, artists' models, and girls who did the trapeze act. Molly had her eyes open now, they were scared. But I shut them with obdurate kisses. She sighed heavily. She never had much to say.

Going back to town in the train, I sat in the corner opposite Molly. The little girl played with an orange in the anarchist's

EPILOGUE TO TRAGEDY

by E. J. RUPERT ATKINSON

THIS woman is a goddess : Worship Her,
As quick and cool and fragrant as the Spring !
If you have sons, bring them to warm Her bed,
Whom She will kiss and cherish one by one,
Plump boys that She will straddle laughingly
Or nurse them each in turn against Her heart.

She is My daughter. Her white raiment tells
The savour of her body sweet with myrrh,
Whose utmost benefaction were Her smile
Were she not free and fearless, unrestrained,
Most willing with this gift miraculous
Which is Her love, which sanctifies the gold
You bring Her, and the tribute of Her joy,
That I may rest secure within my tomb,
Immortal by My godhead which is Hers.

Look well upon this damsel that My tomb
May thus be built above the realms of death
Where there is but the change from death to life ;
No man can grasp one moment from the past
Or stay the swift evasion of each hour,
Which mocks you always with your nothingness ;
But She is elsewhere, tangible, fecund.

Life is the Woman's gift ; it is not ours.
Men have no life except within the tomb ;
But She breathes always : She is yours to love—
Have Her or take them whom She deigns to cherish,
Her damsels, each one echoing Her sweet self ;
In their warm love enjoy Her in your soul ;
Yet shall She take each warrior who has gold,
Or mines, or quarries, granaries, fields or fleets,
Or trains of shackled slaves and caravans
Which traffic with the lords of Babylon,
That you may brim Her precious lap with jewels,
That She may build my tomb where I would dwell.

This damsel is most fair, desirable, pure
Above all flesh—feast on Her love this night !
There are green lawns and groves about Her house,
Vast alcoves reddened with the torches, where
There is no sound except the sound of joy ;
Where there is always love, for Hers alone
Is all the rapture you can ever guess.
There are clear lakes where her pale maidens foam ;
Huge eunuchs of ebony tend them ; there are lutes,
Harps, and the songs of girls and nightingales.

Yet in Herself there is some far regret,
Some sweet dismay, some sorrow barely Hers,

Which makes Her smile so beautiful, which is
 The holy rapture of Her deep desire.
 In her domain dwells nought except Her pleasure.
 There, dreams are strangely echoes of themselves
 As of some grief that lapses into mirth,
 Wonderful grief that smiles away each wrong,
 Which knows what we know : all who live, are dead.

My soul disintegrates : Behold the stars !
 For Me the endless night within My tomb
 Shall people this wide earth with My desires
 And glorify it with My amorous dreams :
 Am I not God, Osiris ? O I fain
 Would sleep. So let this damsel gladden you
 And by Her passion, yielded for your gold,
 Protect My sanctuary, My happy tomb.

She is the very light above the world
 Yet She may be the earth beneath your love.
 It irks me : I am dead. She knows it not,
 No, though Herself she breathes ; mortality
 Warm at Her wanton mouth from Her white breasts
 Buds like a lotus from the flux of dreams.
 Her beauty is Her sweet inconstancy
 As her love is the fragrance of Her life,
 Outrivalling Herself in every part.
 Gaze on Her now ! Well may you marvel at
 Her shoulders, throat, feet, navel, neck and knees,
 Her dimpling buttocks, ankles, thighs and arms,
 Her eyes, Her mouth enticing you ; and all
 The luscious bewilderment of intricate flesh :
 Because She is supernal She is thus.

Wherefore lead forth your camels weighed with ingots,
 Your loaded mules whose bales of merchandise
 Exhale exotic memories of far lands
 Beyond remote and ever-restless seas.
 Bring forth your slaves, your coffers of rich gems,
 Pearls, rubies, sapphires, and all precious ware
 Envied of all, which truly should be Hers,
 The living bright reflection of Her mirth,
 That She may bless you with Her holy passion,
 That I may rest secure within My tomb.

See, I am dead : My thought disintegrates ;
 Divisible each atom of My mind
 As of My flesh : each moment is a breath
 That flickers with the semblance of Myself,
 Itself the concrete form of what I am.
 Time echoes Her and mirrors Her with life,
 With days and nights that clothe Her with romance,
 Herself all changeless in Her changing love.
 There is no moment's peace, nor ever was,
 For any man unsheltered from his tomb.
 Her beauty is eternal : We are dead.

But in My massive pyramid Her calm
 Shall be the pleasant quietude of death,
 Whose full dominion over earth shall yield
 To me again the wealth of all the world,
 To me, the god Osiris. Death excels
 Life and so fashions life, life always : I—
 Behold Me : I am dead and so create
 Myself forever. In my blissful tomb
 All that has been, shall be ; and all that is ;
 She, too ; and on the vast engraven walls
 Her dancing shape, a million times revealed,
 Shall make us merry while the centuries
 Pass by us like a gust of autumn-leaves.
 So spill your eastern jewels about Her feet
 And take Her for your pleasure : She is yours.

Behold, She is My daughter, bride, and queen,
 The holy goddess Isis : this is She.
 And I am as the light within you all
 Who am Osiris, deathless and supreme,
 Immune forever to vicissitude
 Since I am dead. Within each one of you
 I breathe, and trembling with your transient cares
 Know well your lives are Mine, and My life yours,
 Yourselves, as each man hears Me, all My words
 Swell up in you, a shimmering in the light
 Which is My being : truly, I am dead.

Then take this Woman that my sacred tomb
 May be your lasting refuge of delight
 When dreaming there you waken and go forth,
 And breathe and live as I do, even now,
 Forgetful of this unsubstantial world
 Which cheats your credence, mocking at your faith
 With your sick horror of extinction. I,
 As surely as you hear Me, in yourselves
 Live, mingling in each man's own conscious purpose.
 And My words in you, steal you from your thought
 And make you Mine, as I Myself am merged
 In all who see and hear Me, and in all
 Who went before, or shall come after Me :
 So none can perish ever ; no, not one.

Bring then to Her the homage of your youth,
 Your wealth, your love, your joy ; for all is Hers,
 Who has endowed our Immortality
 With the desire of Her enduring flesh.
 This goddess is a woman : Ravish Her !

A BED OF FEATHERS

by RHYS DAVIES

I

ONE year Jacob Jenkins, having amassed a little fortune by steady labour in the pit, went for a long holiday amid the rich meadows and stony villages of Cardiganshire. And he brought back to the Valley a wife.

To the Valley people the union was scandalous and unnatural. For though Jacob was sixty and become arid in a respectable celibacy, the woman he brought triumphantly to the Valley was a rose-red blooming young creature of twenty-five, with wanton masses of goldish hair and a suggestion of proud abandonment about her: a farm-hand, as everyone knew not long after her arrival. Ach y fi. Why couldn't the man marry one of the many local widows near his own age? Jacob Jenkins, a deacon for fifteen years, taking to himself a jaunty-looking slut like that!

But Jacob brought her proudly into the home, presented her to his gaping sister Ann, who for minutes was shocked into silence, and then to his half-brother Emlyn, who accepted her with amused indifference.

"Come to mother us orphans, have you?" Emlyn said with a grin.

"Indeed now, have I been useless, then?" Ann, forty-five and shrewish, demanded at last. She turned to Jacob's wife. "An awful business you'll find it, looking after colliers," she said with an unpleasant grimace.

"With two of you not so hard the work will be," Jacob said.

But Ann announced, drawing off her shawl and folding it calmly: "Oh, now that you have married like this, so late and cunning, no need is there for me here. Go as a housekeeper I will, somewhere in the country." Her lips were bloodless, her big body taut with scorn. She loathed the wife at first sight.

Jacob said indifferently, "Your own way you must go, Ann fach." He had eyes only for Rebecca now.

"No disturbance do I want to make in this house," Rebecca said, tapping her foot nervously.

But Ann ignored her and went out. Emlyn, child of their father's second wife, spat into the fire and sat down in satisfied acceptance of the new menage. And he said to Jacob, when the young wife had gone upstairs to take off her new clothes:

"Jacob, Jacob, a sly taste for women you hid in you. And a juicy taste too!"

Jacob lifted his lizard eyelids.

"Easy capture she was," he said. "A lot of silly bumpkins were after her, with nothing in their pockets, and a liking for dear things she has. Think you she is worth a brooch that was fifty shillings and a bracelet that cost the wages of ten days' work?" His grey old collier's face shone exultingly.

Emlyn laughed. "Worth every penny she is, no doubt!"

Jacob looked at him in senile rhapsody.

"Ah, every penny. A fool I was to stay single for so many years. Take advice from me. Don't you be a frog and remain unmarried for so long. A rare bed of feathers is a woman."

Emlyn stretched his length in yawning indifference. He was not yet thirty, tall and easy with supple strength, and no stranger to the comforting ways of women.

"Don't hurry me now," he laughed. "Satisfied I am as things are." He looked at Jacob. "But you want me to go? Ann says she is going, and you want to be alone?"

But Jacob shook his head. "No, stay you as a lodger, Emlyn bach. An expensive woman Rebecca is going to be I am thinking, and not for ever do I want to work in the dirty old pit. Take some of the expense off you will if you will pay us so and so." Rebecca came back into the room just then, and he said to her: "Willing you are that Emlyn shall stay as a lodger? Asking he was if we would rather be alone."

Rebecca's dark watching eyes suddenly became filled with tears.

"Oh," she said again, faltering a little, her tearful glance upon the young man, "no disturbance do I want to make here. Emlyn, stay you will, won't you?"

Her thick hand played with the blood-red stone of her bracelet; and her eyes looked a little weary in the shining fruit-like freshness of her face.

II

Rebecca did not become a collier's wife easily. She would *not* boil enough water for the baths, she neglected to dry the sweat-damp garments that Jacob and Emlyn threw into a corner of the kitchen as they undressed to wash in the tub before the fire, she couldn't patch moleskin trousers, she couldn't make broth as a Welsh collier likes it—thick and heavy with carrots, onions and leeks. This last fault was hard to overlook, though both Emlyn and Jacob were strangely forbearing with the young woman.

"Thin is her broth and heavy her jam pudding," Emlyn muttered. "No hand has she for tasty cooking."

"Give the woman time," Jacob answered with warmth. "More used to cows' teats her hands have been, remember."

At first, too, she seemed to dislike being present in the kitchen when the men bathed, to hand them this and that as they stood naked in the tub, and to wash the coal-black off their backs, as the women do in the miners' cottages. But gradually she got accustomed to it, even to washing Emlyn's back, while Jacob, having taken precedence in the tub, read the paper or dozed before the fire, attired only in his flannel shirt. For such is the bucolic simplicity of the miner's cottage life; and Rebecca did not mind, presently.

Though she dreamed of a better life. True, this Valley was far nicer than the country of Cardiganshire. Here there were shops filled with blue and red silks and satins, fashionable hats, beads, and thin delicate shoes. Here was a cinema too. The chapel was crowded with observant faces, and she had a position there, as the wife of a deacon. Yet she craved for something

else, she knew, gazing at her handsome face in the mirror, that some other wonderful thing was escaping her. And as she realised that, a strained and baffled look would come into her searching eyes and she would cross her pressing arms over her body, a half-strangled moan escaping her distended lips.

There were some evenings when she was left alone, Jacob in the chapel attending to deacons' business; and Emlyn was always out. She had not made friends yet, and in those long weary evenings she would sit and brood over a novelette, her face a little paler after the work of the day. Or she would go into the parlour and lie down on the sofa in the darkness, or stand at the window and watch with gleaming eyes the few people pass. And then perhaps she would go out for a short walk, to the main street, where the men were gathered in little groups about the street corners, peaceful in the night, the hills rising up tall and secretive, each side of the hushed vale. But she would return with a greater loneliness in her heart.

Jacob would come in to his supper and sink with established familiarity into his chair, his face fixed in a contented leer.

"Well, Rebecca," he would say, watching every movement she made, every expression shifting on her face, "what have you been doing to-night?"

He never touched or caressed her out of bed. But his pale eyes watched her with a possessive satisfaction that crept about her like the tight embrace of a snake. Sometimes she would notice his large oaken hand tremble as it rested on his knee.

Then she would go into the kitchen and wait until the painful throbbing of her heart was stilled.

And he was aware of that, her sheering off from him, like a flame from an icy blast. A strange lipless grin would come to his face then. Still the female was not his. The contented leer passed from his face and in his eyes a fanatical glare shone. As it shone when he prayed aloud in chapel.

III

One Sunday morning she said:

"Staying home from chapel I am this morning."

Her face was rather yellow, though her cheeks as yet had not quite lost their blooming rose.

"Not well you are?" Jacob enquired gently.

"I will make apple dumplings instead," she promised, moving away into the kitchen.

"Don't you stay too long over the fire," he said, looking for his Bible and bag of peppermints. And he went out, dressed in his deep Sunday black.

She was alone. Emlyn had gone to the whippet-racing, the Sunday morning amusement of those colliers who have the courage to scorn the chapel respectability; but she wished he was home, so that she would have someone young to talk with. That morning the house had seemed like a dark and silent prison about her soul, and yet she would not have stirred out of it, fearful lest she would cry aloud in the chapel. She worked, going from room to room with a duster, working without method, only conscious that she must move. She prepared the

apple dumplings. A little later Emlyn came in. He brought with him a dog, one of the whippets.

"It isn't yours?" she asked, gazing fixedly at the slim animal. It had a beautiful sleek body, long and narrow, its glistening fawn coat like velvet, the most delicate-looking dog she had ever seen. "Ah," she cried in sudden excitement, "lovely he is."

"Keeping him I am for a while," Emlyn said, taking the dog's head in his hand with a slow pressure that she watched, bending to stroke the animal. There was a bright glint, almost of passion, in Emlyn's eyes as he held the dog's head tight in his hand.

"Oh, he doesn't like me!" she cried childishly as, her hand touching his sleek coat, the dog winced away. Shaking his head free, the whippet looked at her with a swift regard. Then, sniffing the air delicately, he moved his head towards her, his long narrow head that invited the grasp of a hand. And, fearful but fascinated, her hand moved down over the head until it spanned the jaw in a light and trembling clasp.

"There!" Emlyn said in a satisfied voice, "he likes you."

Slowly she released the head. The dog turned to Emlyn with a nervous look, as though he wondered at some atmosphere in the air.

"My little beauty!" Emlyn cried suddenly in delight. "Just like a funny little child you are."

Rebecca got up slowly, stood watching them, her eyelids dropped, her face inscrutable. Emlyn was as though unaware of her and was caressing the dog, uttering little noises of satisfaction. He passed his large strong hands over the slender body of the dog, slowly up and down, the thumbs on the back and the fingers over the belly.

"Soft and glossy as the back of a swan," he whispered ecstatically.

The dog was quivering under his grasp.

"Hurting him you are!" she exclaimed.

"No," he said, "he likes it." And his powerful collier's hands, that spanned the animal's slim body, were certain and intimate in their caressive grasp.

Then when Emlyn released him, the dog immediately lay down on the mat, contentedly burying his head between his paws. Emlyn looked up.

Rebecca was still standing against the table, taut, her eyelids drooping. There seemed a strange tension on her face. Neither spoke for a minute or so and at last her voice, unquiet and unwilling, broke the silence:

"What will Jacob say, bringing one of those dogs in on a Sunday?" Jacob, as was proper in a deacon, sternly condemned whippet-racing.

"Ah! what will he say?" Emlyn repeated, a little grin on his mouth.

And then he stared at her, his full moist lips distended in that jeering grin. For a moment she looked back at him. Her eyes seemed to go naked in that moment, their blue nudity, chastened of weariness and pain, gleaming full on him.

She moved away, went into the kitchen and sank upon a chair. The yellow pallor of her face was again evident. She looked as though she wanted to be sick.

Jacob came in, his face still exalted from the chapel prayers. Immediately he saw the sleeping dog.

"Whose is that?" he asked sternly.

"Keeping it for a while I am," Emlyn said fondly. "A little angel he is."

"Bah!" Jacob uttered, violent wrath beginning to burn in his shrunken cheeks. "Bring you one of those animals in this house? Come I have from the Big Seat of the chapel, the words of our prayers still full of fire in my heart, and this vessel of wickedness my eyes see as I enter my house!"

"Ach, Jacob, if wickedness there is, blame you the men that use the animal."

"He is a partner in your Sabbath abominations. Take him away from here." A storm was gathering in Jacob's eyes.

"He likes the warmth of the fire. Look, Jacob, innocent as a little calf's is his face."

The dog had lifted its head and was gazing at Jacob with a pleading expression in his glinting eyes. But his gaze made Jacob more infuriated.

"Out of these rooms where I move," he began to shout. "Take him back to his owner or tie him to the tree in the garden. Put evil in the house he does."

Rebecca had come into the room. She said, her voice scarcely above a mutter: "Comfort let the little dog bach have, Jacob. Delicate he looks and company for me he'll be."

Jacob turned to her. "Ignorant of the wicked sports he is partner to you are, Mrs. Jenkins," he replied angrily. "No, let him go out of this house."

Emlyn began to grin. He was really indifferent. The grin on his handsome tolerant face was irritating to Jacob, who began to moan:

"Ach, awful it is for me to have a brother who spends the Sabbath mingling with abandoned and dirty-minded men. Take you warning, young man, the Lord is not mocked and derided long."

"All sorts come to our races," Emlyn reflected comfortably, "and happy and healthy they seem. No sour faces such as gather in the chapels." He called to the dog and lazily took him to the garden.

IV

That night she dreamed of hands.

They were upon her breasts, outspread and clasping; and there was such a pain beneath them that her lips moved in anguish. She did not know whose hands they were, her mind strove to discover. A horror came upon her, she seemed to struggle. But the hands were immovable and finally she submitted, drifting into the gloom and the horror, moaning until she woke in the darkness, hearing the bell of the alarm clock.

"Jacob," she called, louder than usual, "Jacob."

Jacob grunted. He had been deep in slumber. Rebecca

got out of bed and lit the candle. Then Jacob, his face grey and corpse-like in the dim light, moving his limbs with the effort of an old man, followed and put on, with grunts and sighs, his thick striped flannel drawers.

She went downstairs, after calling Emlyn. Her mind was still drugged with slumber and in her too was the shadow of that unbearable pain. With mechanical drugged movements she set about the usual tasks—blew the fire into a glow and set the kettle, prepared the breakfast and the men's food-tins for the pit. She was in such an abstraction that when she turned and saw Emlyn, who had silently entered in his stockinged feet, she shrank back with a little cry.

"What's the matter with you?" he exclaimed.

For a moment or two she stared at him. His face! Ah, she had never seen it before, not as she saw it now. Her heart seemed to dart in a flame to her throat, her lips could utter no word. And there he stood, strange and watching, looking at her curiously.

Then she woke with a jolt and bent her head to cut the bread.

"Make a noise coming down you ought to," she said. "Not quite awake am I, early in the morning like this."

Emlyn began to whistle with a shrill male energy that made her shudder and went into the kitchen for his boots.

Jacob came down, coughing. He seemed to creak as he sat in his chair, his face like a wrinkled stone.

They all sat down to breakfast, Rebecca between them. There was cold ham and thick black tea. Jacob began to grunt:

"Wheezy I am again this morning. Glad I'll be when I'll be able to lie in bed longer."

Rebecca was looking at her husband. As he uttered the last word he glanced at her and a cunning grin came over his face. She felt her stomach rise, her mind reel.

"Jesus, white you've gone, Rebecca," Emlyn said quickly.

Jacob looked at her calmly. The cunning grin had become an obscene and triumphant leer.

"Well, well, one must expect such things now," he said.

"What!" exclaimed Emlyn in a sharpened voice. "True is it, Rebecca?"

She suddenly swept her hand before her, upsetting her cup of tea.

"No," she said loudly, "no."

"Ach, you don't know," said Jacob. "And there's a mess you've made, Mrs. Jenkins."

"No, it's not true," she repeated loudly. Her eyes glittered.

Jacob sniffed as he rose from the table and loosened his belt.

"See we shall," he continued hatefully, sniffing laughter over the words. "Think you you are different to other women?"

She sat, her face stretched forward like an animal suddenly aware of some ominous portent. The men gathered their things together.

"Take you heart, Mrs. Jenkins," Jacob said.

She watched them go off—they worked side by side in the pit, on the same seam. Her husband's back suddenly roused a fury of hate in her—she could have clawed in venom the coarse

thick neck above the cotton muffler. But Emlyn—going through the door last—turned and smiled at her, a quick brilliant smile that rippled in a delighted shudder over her, until her own moist mouth reflected it.

She removed the breakfast things. How quiet and familiar the house had become! She thought of the day's work in a sudden access of energy; and then she began to sing *Merch y Ydfa*. The rows of polished plates standing on the dresser pleased her—how pretty were the little Chinese bridges and the sleeping trees! She plunged her hands into a bowl of cold water and enjoyed the shudder that ran through her blood.

Then the bark of a dog made her lift her head quickly. She went in haste to the pantry and filled a pan with pieces of bread, pouring milk over. Again came the bark, and she hurried out with the pan to the back garden.

The whippet stood outside its roughly made kennel.

"Well, well now," she called soothingly, "is he hungry then?"

She knelt on the earth before it, holding the pan for it to eat; and as the animal ate she admired again the fawn sheen of his coat and the long delicate shape of his body, which quivered in pleasure.

V

Then from that morning Rebecca seemed to awaken as from a long and dull slumber. Her eyes became wider, a blue and virgin fire glowing beneath the thick lids; and as she went about, her body walked with a taut and proud grace, flaunting a fierce health. Her voice became plangent and direct, coming from her heavy lips.

"Ha, agree with you does married life," Jacob said.

She slowly turned her head to him.

"Ha," he repeated, "rich and nice as a little calf you are now." And he added with lecherous humour, "Afraid of you I was at first, in Cardigan. More like a Bristol cow you were then."

She pressed her hands down over her hips, lifting her shoulders and looking at him with drawn brows.

"Not angry with me you are?" he asked with childish complaint. "A compliment I was paying you."

She said, a metallic sharpness wavering in her voice: "Don't you watch me so much. Continually your eyes are watching me."

Curiously, he dropped his head before her anger. For the first time she realised her power.

"Like a prison keeper you behave," she added. "Always you are staring at me as if I wanted to hide something from you. Suspicious of me you are?"

His instinct was aroused by her question.

"Something to hide you have, then?" he asked, jerking his head up.

"What can there be to hide!" she exclaimed with such artless surprise that again his face became expressive of his relentless lust for her.

"Only a thought passing in my head it was," he muttered.

She roused herself. She seemed to glitter with an ominous vitality, female and righteous.

"A dirty old swine you are," she said loudly.

He received this with silence. Then his voice became plaintive and ashamed; he said:

"Harsh you are with me, Rebecca. Forgive an old man's errors you must."

He looked at her with abject pleading in his eyes. She stared back at him. And still she saw behind the flickering childish pleading in his eyes the obsessed leer of the old man, the relentless icy glitter of his lust. She drew back and her voice had something of a threat in it as she said:

"Well, don't you be so suspicious of me at all."

She went upstairs to their bedroom.

The evening sun invaded the room with a warm and languid light, a shaft falling on the scarlet counterpane of the bed. The soft glow soothed her. She gazed in the mirror and, biting her lower lip, softly murmured his name. "Emlyn, Emlyn." Her head dropped, she sank on the bed and covered her face with her hands. But when she lifted her head again her face was smiling. She went to the dressing-table and combed her hair. She passed into Emlyn's room and began to look for some odd job to do. She looked over his garments to see if any buttons were missing. All were in their places, and then she opened the drawer in which he kept his ties and collars. As usual, the drawer was untidy. She began to fold the things.

Among other oddments she found a scrap of paper upon which was scrawled *May Morgan, 30, Glasfryn Street*, and she stood up to scrutinise it carefully. Then she tossed it back into the drawer with a gesture of disdain.

When she went downstairs Jacob was sleeping in the armchair, his hands clasped over his stomach. His mouth had dropped open and a thin line of saliva was descending from it. She laid the supper quietly, so that he should not waken. Her senses were marvellously tranquil; she moved about with soft intimate movements, her face relaxed as though she were utterly at peace with the world.

Jacob ate his supper with chastened solemnity. She dreamily watched his wad of bread and cheese decrease. He took her long silence as a sign of grieved anger against him, and he anxiously studied her face, eager to see a sign of compassion.

Emlyn came in and joined them. He was slightly tipsy, and his face, handsome and flushed, seemed to give off a ruddy heat of ardour. He sat at the table and gazed round, a critical smile on his lips.

Jacob sniffed with deliberation.

"God, we had a talk to-night!" Emlyn exclaimed.

"About what?" asked Rebecca.

"Socialism," he said exultingly.

Jacob sniffed again.

"Wisdom was in your talk, no doubt," he said suavely.

"Godly seems socialism after five or six pots of beer."

"Jacob, Jacob, a hard-bottomed old Tory you are getting. No wonder you are getting such a grizzler."

"All your evenings you spend like that?" Rebecca asked.

"I like mixing with men," Emlyn said, "to save my mind and joints from getting stiff." He laughed uproariously at this. Rebecca and Jacob remained grave and unsmiling.

"And your pockets from keeping full," Jacob added unctiously. "A poor old mongrel you will become, not worth a penny."

"Ha," Rebecca cried swiftly, "a runner after women he is too I should think."

Emlyn turned his bright, glazed eyes full upon her.

"The wrong way you put it, Rebecca," he said softly, "nowadays the women it is who have the pleasantest tongues."

She drew back her head. Her bosom seemed to rise in a storm.

"Vain as a silly peacock," she jeered, "nothing is there in you for a woman to get excited about."

He laughed again, loudly. There was a coarse maleness in his laughter, a flood of primitive strength.

She sat there, high and proud, the colour deepened and vivid in her face. Jacob seemed to ignore them, sucking up his tea with solemn contempt. He knew that his half-brother was lost to the Baptists for ever. His former protests and denunciations had all been in vain, and now Emlyn interested him no more.

Supper finished, Jacob sat by the fire to read a chapter of the Scriptures before bed. Emlyn lit a cigarette and restlessly began to study a racing list which he took from his pocket.

Rebecca cleared the supper things into the kitchen. Her heart beat with a hard painful throb that was unbearable, and as she carried the crockery into the kitchen she seemed to sway with a slight drunken movement, her head drooping.

And as she was washing the dishes Emlyn came noisily into the kitchen and kicked off his boots. Then he turned and looked at her. Through the dim candlelight his eyes shone down on her like a cat's. She crouched over the pan of water in a sudden fright: she thought he was going to advance on her and take her there, suddenly and silently. She began to pant in fear.

They heard Jacob noisily clearing his throat and spit in the fire, and the spell was broken. But Emlyn, with a sleek, drunken smile, came over to her and pressed his hands over her swelling breasts. She moved in anguish and stared at him with remembering eyes. Ah, his grasp was familiar, this agonising rush of her blood suddenly familiar: she remembered her dream. Only the dark horror that had wrapped that dream was not here.

She lifted her face; mutely they stared at each other. Then with a shy and ashamed look she resumed her work.

He went back into the other room, whistling.

VI

Each day passed in an ecstasy of dreaming. When she rose in the early morning she took greater care of her appearance. But it was a relief to see the two men go off to work—then she

was alone to dream as deliriously as she liked. Perhaps she was the only collier's wife in the district who was dressed as though for a jaunt when the men returned from work. She bought a flimsy apron to wear over her frock, and a box of powder to soften the colour of her face: she began to look subtle. Once Jacob exclaimed irritably:

"What's come over you, woman! Extraordinary in your ways you are getting. No respectable woman dresses like that this time in the afternoon. Follow you how the others in the street are—hard-working women they look. A laughing stock you will make yourself."

Rebecca tossed her head.

"Sluts they look," she said, "and sorry I feel for them."

"Half a dozen children you ought to have, Mrs. Jenkins," Jacob answered warmly, "and come to your senses you would then."

Emlyn broke in:

"Out of her senses! Like to see women become machines of flesh you do, Jacob. Use them until their wheels are worn out. Yes, use them, that's all you see in women."

Jacob became angry. "A worshipper of women I am," he cried in the manner of a Baptist preacher. "Did not Jesus Christ come through a woman! And when I see one give herself over to frip-fraps and idle her flesh all day, vexed and disgusted I become."

"I work all day and change at four o'clock," Rebecca cried hotly, "because bright I want to be by the time you come home."

"Bright with a blouse and petticoat!" Jacob jeered. "Bright enough it is for me to know that my wife you are. Without meaning are the clothes that cover your body."

Rebecca shrank back. She went about her work without another word. Not until the time came for washing Emlyn's back did her averted and ashamed face lift itself in ardour again.

She usually washed the thick coal dust off his back with movements that were far too delicate, so that it took a long time before his flesh shone white again. But he did not complain, crouching in the big wooden tub, and did not shiver, like Jacob, for whom she was never quick enough—the nightly bathe was always unpleasant for him.

This evening she felt vengeful. Jacob had had his bath and was sitting in his shirt before the fire in the other room, warming his naked legs. She scooped water over Emlyn's back and passed the soap over the collier's black skin. And with her two hands, softly and ah, with such subtle passion, she began to rub the soap into his flesh, disregarding the rough flannel used for that task. Into the little hollows of his muscular shoulders, down the length of his flawless back, over the fine curves of his sides, she caressingly passed her spread hands. Beneath them his flesh seemed to harden, draw itself together as though to resist her. But—she could feel another answer to her quivering touch. She became exhausted, her breathing difficult. So she rested for a moment or two, and then, as he moved restlessly in his crouching attitude, she took a bowl of

clean warm water and poured it over him. The flesh gleamed out, white-gold, a delicate flush beneath, like a heap of wheat burned hot in the sun.

"There," she breathed, "you must use the towel yourself. Tired I am."

He did not answer, neither did he move up from his crouching. She went into the living-room. Jacob, his hands clasped over his stomach, was dozing before the big fire. In his multi-coloured flannel shirt he looked gaunt and grotesque. She went up to the bedroom. Her eyes were gleaming with a kind of remorseless brilliance; her mien was profligate and mobile. She squatted on the floor like some brooding aboriginal dark in the consciousness of some terrific deed hovering. She squatted there, dark and brooding, and heard his steps approach, behind her. His hands were upon her shoulders and entering her bosom. A shock, icy and violent, went through her: she dropped her head. Yet she felt as though she lay amid the softest velvet, folds of soothing dark velvet about her. No word was spoken and presently she was alone.

VII

Then came the time of the Cyfarfod, the Big Meetings in Jacob's chapel—a week of important services. A well-known preacher and other ministers came: every night there would be a long service, with *two* sermons. A week of fiery oratory and prayers like flaming gas. Jacob, his deacon's face pompous and weighty, directed Rebecca to see that his Sunday clothes were spotless, that there were seven clean stiff collars ready, that a new heart-shaped tie was bought.

As these instructions were given Emlyn blew whiffs of cigarette smoke to the ceiling, a secret and ironical smile on his face. Rebecca saw it with a little shudder. Jacob added:

"Enjoy the preaching you will, Mrs. Jenkins. The sermons of Mr. Prys-Davies can make you cry, enjoy them so much you do. Sometimes, so great is his shouting that crack like a wall does his voice."

She was silent. Emlyn broke in:

"Darro, Jacob, those meetings are only for brainy men and old women who cannot take pleasure in anything else."

Rebecca thought this incautious and she said quickly:

"Oh, enjoy them I shall, Jacob. Little outings they'll be for me, instead of staying in this house every evening."

Emlyn drew in his stretched legs and spat in the fire.

"Gluttons for religion you two are," he jeered.

The Cyfarfod opened on the Sunday; there was no hot dinner that day, as Rebecca went to the three services. She arrived home at ten o'clock that night, her eyes rather wild and obsessed. Jacob had stayed back with the deacons in the vestry.

Emlyn was reading a periodical, waiting for his supper.

"God!" he exclaimed, "their beds people ought to take to that chapel."

"The preaching was good," she said slowly. Her cheeks seemed to sag, her face was rather pitiful. He watched her.

"Enjoy it you did!" he laughed.

"I *did* cry," she answered in a subdued voice.

He rose from the chair and clasped her shoulders. But she drew away a little, her head dropped.

"Ah, foolish you are like all of them," he said, "all those damned hypocrites."

She shrank further away. She was in that mystical state that by prolonged hymn-singing and prophetic preaching can so easily be induced in Welsh people.

"No, no," she muttered, "peace was there to-night."

But he followed her, slowly and sinisterly, and as she reached the table pressed her back over it in his destroying embrace. He caught her unwilling mouth and warmed her with his lips. She tasted the sweet langourous contact of his dripping tongue. She could have screamed in the violence of her soul. Her hands clasping his shoulders, she could have torn him in her agony of hate and lust.

"Tuesday," he whispered, "Tuesday you stay home." Then he let her go and went back to his chair.

Silent and still, she remained for some moments by the table, her arms across her face. Presently she muttered:

"What am I to say?"

"Oh, tell the old fool that your sickness is coming on again. You know, deceive him with soft soap." His voice was coarse and brutal.

Jacob came in, fiery banners still burning in his soul. His long, arid face was lit with them. He began immediately, sitting down to supper:

"The children of Israel sit down to their meat with thanksgiving to the Lord who gave it them. With singing voices and loud music we have praised his name, and on our bended knees given up our sins. We have listened to the voice of one whose soul is deep with wisdom. Out of his mouth has come big words and exalted phrases."

Emlyn listened gravely and said: "Ach, Jacob, strange it is to me that you are not a local preacher yet."

But Jacob waved this derision aside:

"The wicked shall mock in their ignorance. How can they see the hand of the Lord in their whippet racing and games of painted cards? But with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah they shall sit in misery."

He ate his supper with austere dignity, seated patriarchally in his armchair, his jaws working rhythmically. He looked rather fearsome. Rebecca did not say a word, but presently he turned to her:

"Rebecca Jenkins, say you that the meeting moved you?"

"Yes."

"Did not the wings of angels beat about the singing!"

"Very beautiful was the singing," she answered.

"Tired you look," he said sternly.

"Well, after three long services——"

He bent his head to her; there seemed to be iron and fire in his voice as he said:

"Yes, a good wife you have been to-day. When we were

singing did I not think, Blessed is our union to-day : my wife Rebecca lifts up her voice with mine in Cyfarfod, her voice is as my voice, her body is with my body here."

She met his burning stare. Every emotion seemed to flee from her consciousness and she seemed to taste death in her. The fiery purpose of these eyes blasted her.

Emlyn seemed not to hear or see anything ; he ate his Sunday night cold beef with head bent at the other end of the table. When he had finished he went back to his periodical, stretched his legs into the hearth, and casually lit a cigarette.

Rebecca's steps dragged with weariness and dread as she cleared away the supper things.

And the following two days she waited in a kind of numbness, her eyes glittering obsessively under her sullen brows. Tuesday, as Jacob hurried over his bath, she told him quietly :

"I am going to stay home to-night and rest."

"Why, Rebecca fach ?" he demanded.

"I—I," she muttered, her eyes cast down, "something comes over me lately. I could faint, so crowded does the chapel get."

His face hung over her, she could hear the roused intake of his breath.

"Better ask Mrs. Watkins next door to come in and keep you company," he said slowly.

"Don't you be silly about me," she answered hurriedly. "A little rest is all I want."

"Broody you will get, alone," he went on fussily. "Think you it is——"

"Oh go on, like an old woman you are, making a bother. Wait you for plainer signs."

"All right. But take you care of yourself."

Later she went into the parlour and pressed her hands upon her head in an agony of mingled loathing and fear. She felt as though she bore a sword within her, a glittering blade which might at any moment split her being in two. She crouched behind the door, covering her head, her face contorted and ugly ; she heard Emlyn go out and she went to her task of clearing the living-room after the men. Then Jacob came downstairs in his chapel clothes and after an admonishment that she was not to do too much, went off in dignified haste to the meeting.

Slowly she went upstairs and entered her bedroom. Slowly and carefully, as though she were following some definite and dictated plan, she removed her clothes. Her face was repulsive, contracted in an orgasm of primitive realisation, her eyes fixed like balls of blue marble, her lips thick and distended. Unclothed, her body looked hewn out of pure hard flesh, barren of light and shade, solid flesh of marble, hard and durable. Her breasts sloped forward like cornices of white stone, her thighs were like smooth new pillars. From her head her loosened hair fell in a shower of silky gold threads, rich and lovely upon the polished stone of her shoulders. For moments she stood still in her gleaming nudity, as though she had indeed turned into a hewn white stone. Only when she moved to the bed there was the sudden grace of life.

She heard the click of the front door latch.

He was mounting the stairs; she called out in a voice strange to her own ears:

"He has gone, Emlyn."

Emlyn went back to the front door and locked it.

VIII

She came downstairs and into the living-room. Emlyn was sitting in the armchair, smoking easily and contentedly.

"Are you going to stay in then?" she asked.

He smiled at her, a fatuous contented smile.

"Don't you be nervous," he said lazily, "or suspicious Jacob will get at once. I am going to sit in this chair until he comes in." He lay back deeper, his legs hanging limp. "A task it would be for me to go out to-night."

But Rebecca burned with a vivid heat that showed in her mottled face and lithe powerful movements. She looked flushed with strong life. Emlyn watched her move through the living-room and said in a sniggering whisper:

"A marvel you are, Rebecca darling."

"Ach!" she exclaimed, making a gesture of disgust.

"But considerate of you I've been——" he said calmly.

Her cheeks flushed a deeper red.

"But you wait——" he continued.

His lechery was like the stinging of a whip on her quivering flesh. Again, cleaving up through her desire for him, she felt a sword of destruction within her. She looked at his throat with haunted eyes.

"Now Rebecca," he coaxed, "take things in a natural way. Be ready for Jacob."

But she dropped on her knees, bowed down on the floor before him, crouching, her arms shuddering over her breasts.

"What shall we do!" she cried, her distorted face thrust to him. "Living in this house together. What shall we do!"

He leaned to her rather angrily.

"Rebecca, Rebecca, use control on yourself. Shocking this is. What if he came in now!"

"How can we live together here now!" she moaned.

"Ach, certain we can," he said sharply.

She drew back.

"But how can it go on. Two men, and you his half-brother," she cried again. There was horror in her face and her eyes seemed utterly lost.

He stooped before her and pressed her between his thighs, lifted her up with his hand, looked at her long and steadily.

"Go on we will all right. You leave it to me. Rebecca, enjoy it you should. A little secret between ourselves."

She laid her head on his thigh and burst out:

"Oh, I love you Emlyn. Only with you I want to be. Horrible it will be for me to go to bed with Jacob again. That it is will kill me. Always I am thinking of your arms and your mouth kissing me."

"Ah! a few good times we will have."

She wrenched herself free.

"No," she cried with anger, "one or the other!"

"Don't you be a fool now! Go you cautious and everything will be all right." He became impatient with her, and her dramatic and hysterical mien alarmed him. Jacob might come in any moment. "Can't you take patience with an old man like Jacob. Only a little soft soap he wants."

"Ha!" she answered venomously, "a part of his God I have become. When I am with him in the night sometimes he prays as though he was praying through me. Like God he makes me feel."

Emlyn laughed.

"Don't you laugh!" she shouted.

"Shut up," he said quickly.

"Well, don't you joke about this."

He sat back and was silent. Anything to calm her. She went into the kitchen and put the kettle on. And it was just then that Jacob came in.

"No supper laid!" he exclaimed.

"I was just starting——" Rebecca said, coming into the living-room.

Jacob gazed at her. More colour you have than before I went," he said. "In the first prayer to-night I asked God to see to your comfort. For indeed ill you looked."

She stared at her husband without a word.

"Ignorant that she was unwell I was," Emlyn said hastily, "or stayed in I would have, to keep her company."

Jacob slowly turned his gaze to Emlyn.

"So alone she's been most of the evening!" he said as though pondering over the fact.

In a caught, nervous voice that sent a flame of anger over Emlyn, Rebecca said:

"Go on, don't you worry about me. Accustomed to being alone I am."

"Not very lonely were you in the evenings in Carmarthen," Jacob said. "Seemed to me it did that plenty of louts were hanging about."

"Louts they were," she answered, regaining something of her natural demeanour. "And innocent of any behaviour I was."

Jacob went to hang his coat up in the passage-way. And Emlyn shot an angry glance at Rebecca, who tossed her head. There was a strange glint in her eyes now.

During supper she was mostly silent, replying in a short and vague fashion when the men spoke to her. She seemed occupied with some problem, her brow rather sombre. And in that mood Emlyn was afraid of her.

Then from that night something entered the house. It was in the air like the still presence of death, it was in the drawn tension of Rebecca's paling brow, it was in the forced jocular humour of Emlyn. And, too, in the frozen drop of Jacob's eyelids as he sat in his chair, silent for long periods, there seemed a kind of foreboding, a chill.

Rebecca's conduct sometimes infuriated Emlyn. She would look at him with a long and shameless intensity when the three

sat at a meal together : the expression of her whole body seemed to cry their secret. Once when they were alone he said to her :

"Behave yourself, you fool. You make your thoughts plain as A.B.C. Old Jacob might be, but not a blind ape is he."

She set her jaw sullenly. "I know," she said.

"How is it you act so childish then !" he exclaimed savagely.

He was a different Emlyn now. She saw him contemptuously, his fear. Yet she was determined to force the issue. She said coldly : "A rabbit's mind you've got."

"Rabbit be damned. Worse it would be for you if Jacob found out."

She drooped towards him. "Then always we could be together !" she whispered with a sudden change of mood, her eyes gazing ardently upon him.

He let her caress him : until he fixed his mouth upon her's with a fury that satisfied her. But with that he too had to be content. Rebecca was becoming wily.

"To-morrow night," he muttered drunkenly, "he will be at the deacons' meeting."

"Suspicious he is getting," she said derisively. "Not a blind ape is he."

"Hell and Satan take him," he went on, "my female you will be to-morrow night."

She laughed.

IX

Tramping together to the pit in the early morning, Jacob said to Emlyn :

"What is coming over the woman. Noticed you have, Emlyn, how changed she is ?"

"Yes," Emlyn answered irritably, "trying she is. Look you, my vest wasn't dry this morning and my trousers was still damp in the corner where she threw them yesterday. And like a peevish owl she is in the mornings now."

"Ah," muttered Jacob, "more to complain of I have."

Emlyn glanced aside at his half-brother's face. Its sharp grey profile was outlined in the keen air as though cut out of cardboard, and it had a flat, dead expression. Emlyn felt a moment's pity for Rebecca : what joy could *she* have from this arid mechanism of dry flesh walking beside him.

"Happy you seem with her," he said with a note of surprise.

"She keeps herself cold to me," Jacob said. "Yet like a playful little mare she was before we were married."

"Difficult is the first year or so with a woman like Rebecca," Emlyn observed wisely.

"Mine she is," said Jacob with sudden intensity. "Yet I will have her."

Emlyn said nothing. They tramped along, up the hill towards the pit in the far reach of the quiet vale. Emlyn became aware of something grim and warning in Jacob's demeanour as he strode silently by his side. His face was still grey and inscrutable, but in his movements there was some dark austerity, like a warning. What was brooding in that shut resentful mind ?

They were joined by other colliers, dark-browed under their

caps, tramping in a ragged black procession to the pit, under the dawning sky. Across the bridge the sound of their footsteps softened in the thick black coal dust, they trooped into the alley-ways between the black-coated sheds and the lines of small coal trucks, up to the lamp room, where they were given their polished lit lamps.

Jacob and Emlyn kept together: they worked side by side. At the shaft they waited their turn to enter the cage. The two wheels aloft spun against the metal sky and dropped their thick and shining ropes taut into the gaping hole beneath: one cage emerged and clashed loudly into stillness. Jacob and Emlyn, with fourteen others, crowded in, and ahead a bell clamoured. The cage descended like a stone.

Arrived at the bottom, a brick-walled tunnel sloped away in the shrill electric light, slimy and dripping. The colliers tramped on, at the side of the rail track, until the walled tunnel ceased and the workings began, propped up by timber. Now light came only from the tiny flames of their lamps. The narrow rail track twisted its way with them, between the walls of rock and timber, the thin rails like twin nerves going deeper and deeper into the rich silence of the earth.

The two half-brothers trudged on without a word, stooping under the beams that held off the earth above, splashing through the pools of black water, until they were alone in their own working.

It was a small clearing thick with props of timber and heaps of stone: at one side the coal face gleamed and sparkled in the lamplight, jutting generous and lively out of the dead earth.

Jacob was looking at the roof examiningly.

"Lewis put it all right afterwards?" Emlyn inquired.

"He's been here," Jacob said. He put his hand on a prop and tried to move it: there was a faint creaking sound. "It's all right," he added, and passed to examine another part of the clearing. Emlyn threw off his upper garments and began to attack the coal face; soon he was absorbed, sweating, in the task of removing the coal from its bed, oblivious of Jacob, who, half-naked also, was working twenty yards away, still fumbling with the timber props and beams.

The hours passed and at ten o'clock the two men paused for a meal. Emlyn's face and body was now black with dust, save where the sweat ran down in streaks; tense from his labour, crouching under the coal face, his eyes shone out blood-red and liquid.

"God above, how difficult the seam is getting, Jacob," he panted, looking round for his food tin. "Where's my box?"

"Here," came Jacob's voice. He was standing, a dark crouching shape beyond the lamplight, ten yards away.

"What you doing there?" Emlyn asked. "Still messing with the timber?" He advanced, ducking his head under the low beams.

Then something moved overhead, as he ducked: there was a sharp creak followed by a tearing as of wood slowly snapping. Emlyn turned sharply, and his face showed taunt and vulnerable for an instant. Then the space was choked with stone and dust.

Jacob clambered down from his perch in the darkness, ran shouting through the clearing, out into the other workings. His hoarse shout for help leapt with a peculiar deadened sound through the still, hot tunnels.

Men came running up, ducking like strange other-world creatures in the dark alleys, wild-eyed and tense.

"A fall," Jacob shouted, "my brother is under."

There were cries of dismay when they saw the heap of stone.

"Jesus!"

"Quick! Hell, what a job."

"Ach, not much hope is there."

They crowded round, worked with feverish haste, shovelling, pulling away with their hands, the rock and earth. Jacob clawed like a possessed beast at the rubble, his eyes glaring maniacally.

"Right on the head, right on the head," he kept on shouting. "I saw it falling."

"Stay you away," one collier muttered, "we'll get at him soon enough."

A large stone had caught him—it lay upon his head and shoulders. There was a heavy smell of blood. They heaved at the rock. Jacob left them alone to their final task. He stood leaning against a prop, his head sunk in his shoulders. He heard a collier's sharp intaken breath as he muttered:

"Christ! a bloody mess."

And Jacob's nostrils quivered and paled in the stench of blood.

X

They laid him, a shape covered in some dark coarse cloth, on his bed and, their faces closed and grave, went out softly—the four colliers who had brought him home. They heard the wild shrill weeping of Jacob's wife in the living-room and the comforting voice of her neighbour. Jacob shut the door behind them and upon the little crowd of people gathered on the pavement.

Rebecca's frightened voice was lapsing into sobs now. As Jacob entered the living-room she lifted her head from the woman's arms and he stared at her fixedly. Her wild face was drenched with tears, her mouth moving pitiaibly in its sobs.

"Hush, Rebecca," he said sternly.

The neighbour protested. "Let her work it off. Natural is it for her to be frightened. Low enough she has looked lately."

But his face was stern and sombre, his eyes fixed in a cold, remorseless stare.

"I will wash and change," he said, "and go out. Many things are there to arrange. Stay you with her, Mrs. Evans, until I come back this evening."

Rebecca burst into further tears.

"Don't leave me alone in the house," she wept.

"Why should you fear death?" said Jacob darkly. "Life it is that we should fear." And he strode into the kitchen to wash.

Later he went out of the house without another word.

"Strange he is," commented Mrs. Evans. "Affected by the accident he must be. Daft in the eyes he looked."

"Yes," Rebecca whispered, "it is of him I am frightened."

"Tut, tut, harmless enough is old Jacob Jenkins," said the other. "Shaken him has his brother's death! Fond of each other they were."

Rebecca shook her head. And she could not keep her hands from trembling. There was a stern and terrible presence in the house, a horror that was closing round her tenaciously and icily, like a freezing drug gripping into her consciousness. What had she seen in Jacob's face when he looked at her? What dark warning had been there?

Trembling and pale to the lips, she awaited his return. He arrived back about seven o'clock and asked:

"Have you lit the candles for him?"

Mrs. Evans said they hadn't, and Jacob took two brass candlesticks from the mantelshelf.

"I will go back now then," Mrs. Evans said. Rebecca made a gesture towards her, then sank into her chair: and the woman went off, after a sharp inquisitive glance at Jacob.

In silence he fixed the candles and lit them. At last Rebecca said tremulously: "Is it arranging about the funeral you were?"

Without looking at her he answered:

"I have been on the mountain. I fled to the hills for silence and prayer."

"Awful for you it must have been," she whispered. "Killed at once he was?"

Jacob slowly raised his head and looked at his wife.

"No. I had words from him before he died."

Her eyelids dropped quickly, she moved nervously in her chair. He took the candles and went to the stairs. There he turned and said:

"Come you up when I call, Rebecca Jenkins."

With a numbed heart she watched him. Ah, what terrible meaning was in his voice and his look. There was something he knew. Her faculties seemed to shrink within her, she felt the horror grip at her will. He knew, he knew. She was seized with panic and yet she could not move. Like a lode-stone the will of Jacob held her in its power, she could not move out of the warning of his look. She would have to go to him and tell him all. Emlyn was gone and there was no strength to which she might cling. She would have to tell him all and pray for his forgiveness. She would serve him and give of her body, all she had, to the last shred of her being. She would content herself with buying pretty clothes and going to chapel to display them, she would make a friend of young Mrs. Rolands and they would go out together in the evenings. Tearfully she thought this, her head sunk in her shoulders, her hands still trembling, while the minutes passed. Her face began to look wild and obsessed. Suddenly she dropped her face into her hands and moaned aloud. No, no, she could not bear the thought of living alone with Jacob, it would be horrible, horrible now.

"Rebecca!"

Violently she started in the chair.

"Rebecca." His voice was stern.

She forced herself to answer. "What do you want?"

"Here I want you."

She stood up and her body seemed to droop within itself. She heard him go back into Emlyn's bedroom. What did he want of her up there, what could she do! But she knew that some awful revelation was waiting, that the deathly horror was gathered in that room for her. For a moment she looked round wildly, as though to flee. And yet there was something reassuring in this familiar room, her living-room, where she had laboured and lived in so much loneliness the last year. Ach, she would face him. What if he *did* know! She had something to tell him. An old man like him. She would not stand in fear of any man. Yet she felt her heart plunging as she slowly climbed the stairs, into the silent darkness of the upper floor.

The door of Emlyn's bedroom was shut, and for a moment she crouched before it in acute dread. Then again came Jacob's voice, sharp, imperious:

"Rebecca."

Why should he bully her! The old fool. She opened the door and entered quickly, demanding: "What do you want?"

The two candles were burning on the little mantelshelf. Jacob was seated beneath them, the Bible open on his knees. He did not answer her question as she came in—only stared at her with his deadened eyes fixed unswervingly upon her. Then he rose, put the Bible on the seat, and took up a candlestick. Sombre and tall in his black clothes, his sere face began to kindle with a dull wrath. The shape on the bed had been covered with a white sheet.

She crouched against the washstand by the further wall, and again her strength ebbed from her, her face paling to the lips. But she forced herself to speak, her voice coming in a dry gulp:

"Afraid you make me, Jacob! How is it you are so strange?"

He advanced to the bedside, holding the candle aloft.

"There," he said, extending his finger downwards over the corpse, "there is your dead."

She stared at him. He went on: "Come you and look for the last time."

Her mouth had gone dry, she could not move her tongue to any word. She lifted her hand to her face, and her eyes were livid with fright.

"Come," he repeated.

She did not stir. His brows drawn, stern, and righteous wrath in his countenance, he went to her and took her arm in his stony grasp. She quivered away from him, a curious sound coming from her lips, but, tightening his grasp, he drew her to the bedside. Her face had become sickly and loose, her breasts panted. Stonily Jacob looked down on her.

"Gather yourself together, woman. Make yourself ready to look for the last time on what you have worshipped."

For a moment she went stiff and taut in his grasp, then, had he not held her, she would have fallen to the floor like a heap of

rag. He put the candlestick down on the little table at the side of the bed, and with one gesture swept the white sheet away from the head and shoulders of the corpse.

She saw. Jacob had taken the canvas wrapping from the filthy wax of the head and the horror lay there revealed in its congealed blood. Rebecca's body quaked, her back bent forward, she screamed at last. Then Jacob half carried, half dragged her to a chair and sat her on it, as she moaned, her head dropping pitiably on her breast.

He went back to the bed and covered the corpse. Then he took up the Bible again and sat down. And he began to read aloud :

"And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him ; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery ; and when they had set her in the midst,

"They said unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

"Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned : but what sayest thou ?

"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. . . ."

For a moment he was silent, glancing up at Rebecca. Her head still dropped on her breast, she sat immobile as one dead. He went on :

"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, woman, where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee ?

"She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her,

"Neither do I condemn thee : go and sin no more."

He closed the book, went on his knees, and, leaning his elbows on the chair, prayed :

"Lord, who am I to condemn my wife Rebecca ? Thy son forgave the woman taken in adultery and now I ask thee for strength to do likewise with Rebecca. Gone far in sin she has, dear Lord, looking with desire on the flesh of my brother Emlyn. And thou hast punished him with this visitation of death. The voice of the world would say, Stone her, cast her out, let her go from thee into the highways and bye-ways. But have I not read the words of thy son ! And what the great Jesus said has opened my heart in pity. Lord, forgive her her great sin against me. To-night the hills cried out to me to slay her, the rocks mocked at my anguish, her name was written in letters of blood upon the sky. For before he died did not Emlyn confess to their behaviour together ? Lord, she has done evil while her husband laboured for thee in thy chapel. Visit her with more punishment if thou wilt. Let her beauty shine no more, let her countenance be marked with grief, let her belly sicken her. But she shall rest quietly in her home with

me, for I will not harden my sorrowing heart against her. For little Jesus sake. Amen."

He rose. Rebecca had covered her face with her hands. He went to her and touched her hair. She moaned.

"Ah," he muttered, "a fool you have been. Think you your sin would not be found out?"

She flung up her head; her face had gone loose and mottled, twitching in tears.

"He told you——" she sobbed.

"But already I knew," he cried harshly. "Think you I have no eyes, no sense to see how you flaunted yourself before him, and how his eyes burned with lust for you! Then confessed to me he did before he died that given yourself to him you had."

Jacob, after one of the Big Meetings had gone up to his bedroom and found a certain belonging of Emlyn beside the bed.

She got up, crouched against the wall, swaying and sobbing. She felt all her life falling to pieces, there was no hope or happiness anywhere. Then Jacob's hand was laid upon her arm.

"Come, Rebecca. Young and pretty you are. Like a little wanton mare frisking in a field you have behaved. But look you now, settle down to life you must and there's peaceful we'll be together——"

He drew her to him. He passed his large strong hands over her, his sunken eyes began to kindle. She swayed in his gentle embrace. Then his arms closed like oak about her, and she lifted her face. It was like a shining hot flower. She was his now.

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## THE COMFORT OF TIME

by RICHARD CHURCH

It is so faint, so frail,  
The agony that is gone,  
The pain of yesterday.  
The burden as of stone,  
The crown of thorn, the nail,  
Time has conjured away.

I, who was proud of grief,  
And stood at bay like the last  
King of an ancient line,  
Find that my challenge is waste.  
Time with its quiet relief  
Humbles my rage divine.

Oh, blind soother of pain,  
What terrible comfort you give,  
Bidding me pause and draw breath.  
Were it not better to live,  
To hunger, and struggle again,  
Than sleep in your breast, as in death?

# THE FAILURE

by JACK LINDSAY

[A room that looks like a broken-down inn-parlour, with a battered leather-cushioned couch, three chipped but sturdy chairs, and a large squat table. A fire in the hearth, by the side of which crouches uncouthly a meagre lanky lad, Zacchary. Ned, tall and sharp-nosed, sits at the table. Hugh, stumpy, one-eared, flat-nosed, enters by the door at the back. There is a noise of wind and occasional claps of thunder all through.]

HUGH: Hell, what a night.

NED: You said it, Hugh: it's hell.

HUGH: I knew it was coming.

NED: It came as sudden and doiting  
As slops thrown out of a window on your head:  
Clean out of nothing—no Look Out Below  
Bawled from the sky.

HUGH: Aw, I knew it was coming.

NED: Why didn't you tell us then?

HUGH: You never askt me.  
I'd a told you if you'd askt me; only you didn't.

NED: Oh, ho!

HUGH: I'd a told you 'cause I knew.

NED: And how did you know, Mister Lord God Almighty  
Know-all?

HUGH: The place here where my rib used to be—

NED: If you're going to tell us all about that smash-up—

HUGH: I'm not. I'm going to say no more than this:  
The wound has itched that much you'd think you  
could hear it

Craking away as if it was gnawing itself.

NED: Well, have you fixed the horses for the night?

HUGH: I have, God blast you.

NED: You're in a sweet mood.

What's wrong? You look as white as if the lightning  
Had splashed you with a soak of mealy flame;  
Or did the mare kick some oats into your blinkers?

HUGH: The horses are snoozling warm, save that they're scared.  
I fixed 'em nice, now—just in time, too:  
The mare had knocked the bail down, she could a got  
out.

Some lazy swine didn't stick it in proper.

NED: That's Zacchary's fault, the ninnyhammer! [kicks him.]

ZAC: It ain't—

NED: Ho, shut up!

You're lucky, you are. If she had got out,  
I'd a belted you after her, and there you'd be  
Chasing a horse as thinks the flogging lightning  
A switch of booming fire made by the devil  
Particular for her rump.

HUGH: I want a drink.

NED: Then drink.

HUGH : I want one after that stinking job.  
 NED : Then take one quick, there's the bottle afore you.  
 HUGH : The cold's doing jiggers up and down my spine,  
 And some greedy bastard's swiggled all the gin.  
 NED : Don't call yourself names, it was you drank it.  
 You had the last drink when you were going out ;  
 I've been finishing the usquebaugh.  
 HUGH : Well, get some more.  
 NED : Up, Zacchary !  
 ZAC : I shan't . . .  
 HUGH : Aw, get it yourself. He's such a knockneed jolthead,  
 He'll spill it in the dark or fall downstairs with it.  
 I want it now.  
 NED : You seem in a funk.  
 HUGH : I am.  
 I don't like horses anytime ; but when they're afeared  
 Kicking in a howling shed, I simply hate 'em.  
 NED : Ho, I'll go, then.  
 [Kicks Zacchary.] You useless streak of whey  
 Coughed up by the cat,  
 You lump of tallow whining with a face,  
 And dropt on somebody's doorstep by a tart  
 Between two lettings-out of her worried self !  
 ZAC : Hi—  
 HUGH : Get a move on. [Ned goes.]  
 Yes, you're a poor doddypole, I agree with Ned  
 For a woman to have spent nine months of blood on,  
 When it could a scarletted her mouth with kisses  
 Bought on Saturday night for a ring of rubies  
 Like blood turned into stone around a spark,  
 Aw, I had 'em once, I know what they look like,  
 Those is the very words I used to Nan.  
 What's it like ? she said ; and it came straight to me—  
 Like gouts of blood and rum gone hard and shiny,  
 I told her back, and she did me down for it,  
 You poor young whippersnapper with the toothache,  
 I dunno why I'm talking to you at all  
 Except that I'd sooner talk than listen to  
 The mammering trees when the wind gives 'em a twist,  
 And talking about such things—  
 Have you ever yanked a girl about by the hair ?  
 Not that I think you have or ever will,  
 But I give you my advice free just the same  
 As if you was a young fellow learning about women  
 From one that has known 'em inside out and most ways  
 Which they being agile can contort themselves  
 When in the mood, and as I was telling you  
 I never woke up till two days out to sea  
 And the mate was a cranky fellow and wanted me hove  
 Overboard ; and if you've followed me,  
 My lad, you'd see what fools these women are  
 To go to so much trouble to drug my rum  
 And have me slugged and pressed and bumped off  
 And almost hove overboard by a cranky mate

All for a bit of bleeding stone in a ring  
Which I'd a tosst her freely in the morning  
For a kiss or two standing on its hindlegs,  
And now to come back where I started from  
Which is to say such babies as you cheat women—  
You ought to breed in bottles, so you ought!  
Sucking cosily away beneath her huggings . . .  
Your mother—

ZAC : Here now, I'd have you know, my mother—

HUGH : What?

ZAC : I won't have it.

HUGH : Then what'll you do about it?

ZAC : Don't you say anything against my mother,—

HUGH : Go on.

ZAC : Ah . . .

HUGH : Go on! [*Zacchary does not reply.*]

I never knew her;

And I'll tell you why that is. I only take women  
When I come sudden into money overnight,  
Whereupon I always take the best-stocking in town,  
Being a man that has great vanity in drink  
And thinks one gilt kiss worth a sludgy dozen;  
And so I always judge 'em by the stockings,  
Not the faces with the pockmarks stopped with paint,  
Not by the scrag of the neck, though that's more sense,  
But by the stockings—by God, Ned's a long time—  
What was I saying? Aw, that I didn't know  
Your mother unless she happened to be, you numbskull,  
One-eyed Nell or Hiccuppy Moll or Swivvle-O Sal:  
I knew that bunch. You could buy 'em thripence  
apiece,

Or sixpence ha'penny the three, reduction for quantity.

ZAC : Hi—

HUGH : Although I don't suppose she was.

They was great slummocky wenches that never wore  
belts,

And when they got drunk they fell flat on their faces,  
Wherefore the three of them had broken noses,  
And clearly they'd not mother such a snippet—

ZAC : Hi now! [*He lunges out at Hugh and catches him  
round the legs. Hugh kicks him off.  
As he does so there is a burst of  
thunder.*]

HUGH : O would you!

ZAC : [*getting on his knees*] Gentle Jesus meek and mild

Look upon a little child

Gentle Jesus meek and mild

Gentle Jesus—

HUGH : O get back there and shut up. [*They stay staring at each  
other for a while, till Ned  
enters.*]

NED : Here's your gin, God damn you.

HUGH : What's wrong with you?

NED : I bumped my head on that pantry-door again.

- I'll smash the damn thing in with an axe next time.
- HUGH : You got a scratch on your forehead.
- NED : Have I, by God ?  
It was that blurt of bloody thunder did it.  
It came with a smack behind me as I turned round  
And lifted me into the air with a kick of noise.
- HUGH : Have some of the gin you brought up.
- NED : That I will.
- ZAC : I want some, too.
- HUGH : Aw, do you ?
- NED : It's Zacchary !  
This is a new game butting in like this.  
I thought I'd a learned him his place, but it seems I  
hasn't.  
What do you mean, squirt, speaking and not spoken to ?
- ZAC : I'm a man. I want some gin.
- HUGH : Ho, do you now ?  
Well, you're not going to get it.
- NED : Come on, Zac.  
Take it if you can, I'll give you leave.
- HUGH : O boot him in the guts.
- NED : That's not the way.  
Talk to him like a father as I does.  
Look here, tadpole, haven't you read the Bible ?  
Don't you know what strong drink does to your inside ?  
It's a flame in the belly, which it makes a lantern  
Of glittering wickedness.
- HUGH : He don't understand you.
- NED : Ho yes he does ; him and me are old friends.  
I know how to put the fear of God in him.
- HUGH : So do I, with the toe of my boot.
- NED : Now you just hearken.  
Here you, dandyprat, with a white face  
Like the belly of a dead fish,  
Do you know what's happened to you ?
- ZAC : Yes, I'm a man.
- NED : I knew the storm had blown out of his ears  
What bits of sense still rasped in his poor head.  
I knew it.
- ZAC : What do you mean ?
- NED : I thought it'd happen.  
I knew for a long time that it was all come loose.
- ZAC : What do you mean ? There's nothing wrong with me.
- NED : If you listened to him walking, you could hear  
The sop of his brains gurgling awash in his head,  
And you looked to see if it trickled out of his ear,  
And now the last squeeze of it has dribbled away.
- ZAC : It hasn't . . . There's nothing wrong inside my head,  
No more'n a buzz or two. It's all a lie.
- NED : Ho, ho, you've been sleeping on your side  
And your wits have dripped out in a dirty smear on  
your pillow.
- ZAC : They haven't. I'd a seen it if they had.  
They haven't. No . . . Have they ? I'd a seen 'em.

- 'Course I'd a seen 'em, wouldn't I? 'Course I would.  
Your brains couldn't come out of your ears . . and then  
I'd a seen 'em if they had.
- HUGH : O leave him alone,  
Or prod him out. Looking at him makes me sick.  
Have some more gin.
- NED : I never said No to that  
In all my mortal life, and I won't start now.
- HUGH : Look here, you didn't believe me, Ned, did you?  
When I said how I knew the storm was itching up.
- NED : Perhaps I did and I didn't. What I think  
Is you're a liar as accidentally told the truth.
- HUGH : I got a story to tell which proves my words.
- NED : I bet you have.
- HUGH : God's truth ! it's true. You listen.  
It was when I was in the galley *John and Martha*,  
Twenty gun she had, just off Cabanas  
Carrying logwood and sugar—
- NED : Well, what about it?
- HUGH : I'm only telling you all that so you can't misdoubt me.  
We had a young fellow who'd had most of his calf  
Sliced off somehow ; now, in the middle of the night  
This young fellow who I'm telling you of  
He walked on crutches, too, which proves my point  
Hopped out of his bunk and off to the captain he goes.  
There's bad weather coming up, he says, I know it,  
I can feel it throbbing here. And all he gets  
Is to be knocked down for it, and before morning  
There was the t'gallant blown clean away :  
Providence's revenge on the unbelieving captain  
I always said, aw, what a whistling crack  
In that wind's crunch ; and it weren't our fault  
The ship didn't go under—
- NED : And why didn't it?  
Because for my sins such few as they are  
The Lord that's sitting on his throne of Glory  
Listening to Alleluys and Stab-me-gizzards  
Which rise in smoke of sound from the roaring earth,  
Decided to plague me with your weeviled stories.  
And all I can say is I'll go clean to heaven  
Straight on a sweeter whistle when death snaps me  
Than any mainmast in a tale of yourn.  
Who goes to sea ? The mangy gutter-swipe  
Caught with his chattering knuckles in a back-pocket—
- HUGH : I wasn't nabbed with my finger in his pocket.
- NED : Well, you was nabbed ; and because you has drunk rum  
Out of negresses' lips as juicy-red  
As roses puffed alive—
- HUGH : And so they are !  
I'd rather have 'em anyway than white ones.  
It's a pleasure to watch 'em grinning all the time,  
Just as if they enjoyed it !
- NED : There's a horse.
- HUGH : Whose is it ? Is it runners ? Where's my pistol ?

- NED : Ten to one it's Mister Jeremy ;  
But there's no harm in taking no risks at all.  
Here's your pistol. You stand the other side,  
And Zacchary, you open the door, d'ye hear ?  
[*Hugh and Ned stand back at each side of the door.*]
- NED : It's alright, that's the knock.  
[*He opens and lets in a tall cloaked figure.*]  
Ha, Mister Jeremy.  
Come in and make yourself at home. There's gin.  
Mister Charles has finished all the sherris,  
So if you want a warmer, drink with us.
- JER : Thank you, Ned. Where, then, is Charles ?
- NED : Upstairs.  
He drunk up all the sherris as I said ;  
He'd had bad luck and he took it out in drink,  
And Zac here that he belted round a bit,  
Till he got that sleepy cursing all the while  
He reached aloft just before the first snore came.
- JER : Your health, gentlemen. [*They all drink.*]
- HUGH : Ho, that's the stuff.
- NED : Bad weather was invented to make man  
As is naturally an ungrateful creature  
Appreciate his liquor, ain't that so ?  
What luck, sir ?
- JER : Bad, too.
- HUGH : Aw, it's a bad night.  
A good 'un for getting quick away from a murder  
But a bad 'un for finding the man first  
Squelching through slush with money in his belt.
- NED : Ho, I'm beginning to like it. Have a look.  
[*He pulls the curtain back, a streak of lightning darts out of the sky.*]  
A good 'un for killing.
- JER : Pull the curtain, fool.  
God knows how near they are. Showing a light  
To tell the hangman in what square of yellow  
You're tucked away : that's what you are doing there,  
You damned fool, Ned.
- NED : I felt quite queer a while back,  
But now the lightning seems so silly-like,  
Dead bough of rotten silver shook at me . . .  
It's like a silly game.
- HUGH : If this is what gin  
Does to a man I'll chuck the bedlam stuff  
And take to water reckless ; that I will.
- JER : Now, don't you get too drunk, you pair of sots ;  
I must see Charles, and then we move, I fear.
- NED : Perhaps you'll be able to shake him up by this.
- JER : Get ready. [*He goes out.*]
- NED : Look at Zacchary cuddling himself by the fire  
As though he were a wench worth wrapping up  
In a tangle of kisses. Looking in the fire  
As though he see great gold in it . . . eh, slug ?  
Onzas of spinning flame. Put in your hand

- And toss us one. I said that once and he did it ;  
 Burnt his hand bad. I never looked so hard  
 At aught save it be through a hole at the fair to see  
 The gypsy girl with hairy legs dancing.
- HUGH : I bet his flesh is like a mouldering turnip,  
 No blood in it to squirm into hot fancies.  
 Hearken, bodkin, sitting tamely there  
 While so many fine murders be walking or riding  
 The roads of the world this very second I spit  
 And crying out reproachful-like on you—  
*[Jeremy enters wildly.]*
- JER : His throat's slit !
- NED : Mister Charles !
- HUGH : What did you say ?
- NED : Aw no . . .
- HUGH : Who slit his throat ?
- NED : Aw no . . .
- HUGH : Where's my pistol ?
- JER : His throat's slit.
- HUGH : Where's my pistol ?
- NED : Aw, shut up,  
 It's there, behind you.
- HUGH : Ha . . . what did you say ?
- JER : I said his throat's slit.
- NED : Well, we heard you, didn't we ?
- HUGH : Who did it ? Are they in the house ?
- JER : Who did it ?
- That's what I ask, and you must answer it.
- NED : What do we know ?
- HUGH : I haven't budged from the room,  
 Not for a moment.
- NED : I haven't neither, no !
- JER : You lying curs, I want the truth. Now tell me :  
 Who has left the room since he went up ?
- NED : Zacchary helped him to bed to take his boots off.  
 Ask him, not us.  
 Zacchary did it, Hugh'll tell you the same as me.
- HUGH : He did it.
- JER : Look up, lad . . .  
 Did this poor thing do it ?
- Never. I want the truth now. Which of you  
 Has left the room ?
- NED : Hugh was outside a hell of a time fixing  
 The horses up, he could a crept in the back.
- HUGH : Ho, sneaky, who went out to get the gin ?
- NED : He was as white and pannicky when he came—
- HUGH : He had a cut on his forehead—
- NED : And said the mare—
- HUGH : He could a nipped upstairs he took that long—
- NED : You should a seen his face—
- HUGH : And shuddered—
- JER : Here !
- NED : You shall not fix on me.
- HUGH : Who started it ?

- JER : Silence !
- NED : I say—
- HUGH : Look now—
- JER : Silence, you liars.  
 I can't wait to sift this babble through ;  
 But no one stirs out of this house before  
 The matter's settled. He was my best friend.  
 I had not grudged him so much to the hemp  
 When he could have had a tumbrel-swagger  
 And died like a gentleman where all could see him,  
 But stuck by dirty swine !
- NED : It's all very well,  
 Captain, for you to charge us ; how do we know  
 You didn't knife him rapid and come down  
 To put it on to us ?
- JER : He was my friend.
- NED : And can't friends change ? Aw, friends are mighty  
 close  
 To enemies sometimes. How do we know what  
 secrets  
 You had betwixt yourselves or what his death  
 Might win for you ? Putting it on to us—
- HUGH : Aye, Ned's got it, it's hot piling on us—
- JER : [*Covering them with his pistols*] : Enough. I shall not  
 argue, but take my justice  
 The way I see it.
- NED : Prove as you didn't do it.  
 [*Kicking at Zacchary.*] Get out of my reach, get out—
- JER : This is my way.  
 Here are two threads. Choose which is the longest.  
 Give me your pistols first. This is to be sword-work.  
 Choose one. [*They reluctantly do so.*]  
 [*To Ned.*] You win.  
 And now you must fight with me.
- NED : I never learned to fight with swords like you did.  
 I won't.
- JER : Then I shall kill you where you stand.
- NED : You won't look on and see me slaughtered, Hugh ?  
 I got you your gin when you asked me. I—
- JER : Will you fight ?
- NED : Out with Zacchary. His ashy face  
 Drops milk in my blood. I can't fight with him here.
- ZAC : Why do you always turn on me ?
- NED : Shut your mouth.  
 Don't talk to me. I can't bear it, nor your face.  
 It's like a living death looking at me  
 And getting mushier white every second.
- ZAC : I am one of you.
- NED : Away, baby.
- JER : Here !
- NED : I don't know what I'm doing. Mister Jeremy !  
 I can't—here you, get out ! what'll I do ?  
 Get out. [*He desperately keeps kicking at Zacchary.*]
- JER : Come.

ZAC [*Rising*]: I've had enough of you,  
Sniggling Ned. Beware of me. I killed him.  
I killed him though ye'd all scorn to suspect it,  
And I'll kill all of you that treat me as he did  
With cuffs and curses. Aye, I will, I'll kill you.  
I'm a man now as much as any of you,  
And there did I show it . . .  
Not but what I'll beg  
Your pardon, Mister Jeremy . . . You don't despise me,  
Do you now? the way they always did . . .  
Killing is easy once you get a start,  
I never thought it was when ye all taunted me  
For being a shiverer. Why don't one of you speak?  
I feel it's all wrong somewhere though I can't tell  
Whereabouts . . . you're hard ones to please . . .  
Mister Jeremy, won't you say something?  
I don't want to be paid, I'll do it for nothing,  
I always wanted to be a great hero,  
And now . . . if only you'll say something . . . please . . .  
JER: Take him upstairs and hang him from the window.  
Tie the rope to the bedstead where Charles lies.  
HUGH: Aye, aye, sir.  
NED: There's some rope beneath the stairs.  
JER: Hurry, we must be far by dawn.  
NED: Here, Zac.  
I often thought I'd like the job of hangman,  
I'd meet so many friends in the way of business.  
HUGH: Aw, it's a fine night to die on. Come along, sonny.  
ZAC: I knew something was wrong. Why don't ye admire  
me?  
Ye all always said I was a coward . . .  
[*They pull him out.*]

# RENAISSANCE

by THOMAS EARP

Long-buried statues break the soil,  
The garden boasts a redder rose,  
And admirable serpents coil  
About the trees where ripe fruit grows.

What tang of must is in the air  
To bring life to a world that dies?  
Tears are the better crystals there,  
For thought at last looks from the eyes.

All, all is past, for all to come ;  
Now new modes build their eidolon,  
While, marching to a lyric drum,  
The army of the years sweeps on.

## EX CATHEDRA

UPON the appearance of *APHRODITE* No. 1, a titled lady cancelled her subscription, one reviewer said he had thrown his copy into a garbage tin out of consideration for his waste-paper basket, another dully said he was not amused, another said he could not understand Jack Lindsay's article, the *Nation* said "No artistic value," several women tried with no success to cut Liam O'Flaherty dead; however several minor reviewers welcomed the rash venture, kind friends did not hesitate to back-slap, and for instance Charley Lars sold sixty copies in his sentry-box bookshop in Red Lion Street. Whereupon the Editors and Liam and Charley Lars got drunk in a cellar kept by Louis XVII, other guests being Rhys Davies, who couldn't find the cellar at all; Tommy Earp, who tried to sing "Rule, Britannia" at 3 a.m. on a beer barrel (empty), but overbalanced and broke Louis's collarbone; a calm German scholar who had to go early; an Oxford Don who passed out; an ex-member of the I.W.W. with good intentions but a too-small stomach; a bald and cheerful Australian cartoonist; two roaring Irish bhoys covered in tap-room sawdust; two great policemen; and other Bloomsbury intellectuals. At dawn Charley Lars and the Editors took Liam home, where he irrationally began swallowing raw eggs. Then Charley vanished in a mist, and the Editors sat down in the gutter, together with a pint of (salvaged) whisky to reflect upon the Universe. Hence *THE LONDON APHRODITE* No. 2, a sincere production, if somewhat melancholy in places.

A footnote in No. 1 announced that this periodical is being produced "not for profit, but for the fun of the thing." A wondering old gentleman wrote in to ask what Jack Lindsay does when he is serious if he wrote *The Modern Consciousness* for fun? The answer would get us into trouble, we feel sure.

For next number we have an uproarious ballet scenario on Hogarth, by Robert Nichols; a long story by Karel Capek, Norman Lindsay's *Master of Time*, and a poem by Aldous Huxley. This number will also contain an appreciation of T. S. Eliot by Jack Lindsay.

Monographs are in preparation on Norman Douglas and Bakunin.

As only six numbers are to be issued, the early submission of manuscripts is supplicated, space being tight.

We will publish anything the "literary" papers are funk of, providing it has artistic vitality. We are indifferent to the kind of criticism which thinks we are pornographical. Actually the First Number sold 2,000 copies without any boost and is still selling. And we would much rather be alive than "modern."

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